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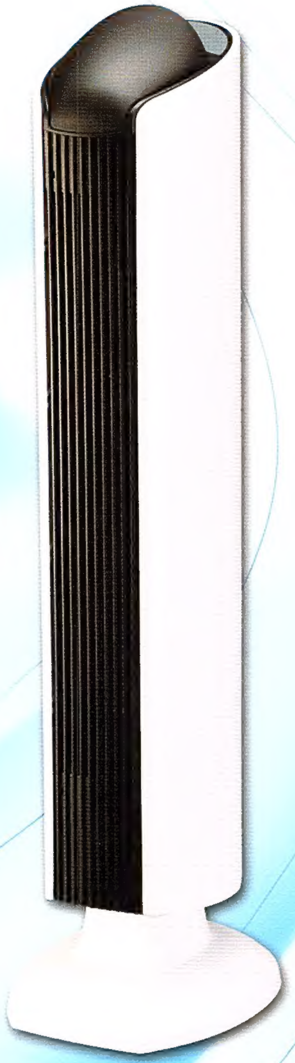

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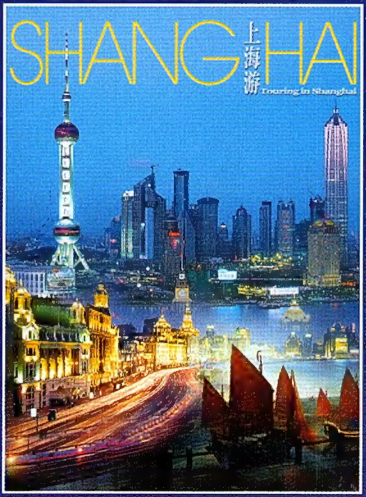
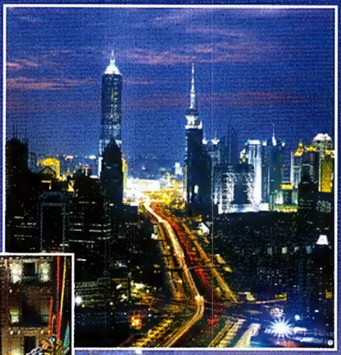


Shanghai has evolved at an unprecedented speed for decades into the biggest commercial city in China and one of the great metropolises of the world. Favourably located at the mouth of the Yangtse River, Shanghai has a long history and a rich culture. Commercial tower blocks and traditional buildings exude their individual charms simultaneously in the Pudong District, where hundreds of buildings in different styles, old or new, are collectively known as the Exposition of World Architecture. A kaleidoscope of entertainments and festivals of Old Shanghai attracts scores of entrepreneurs and travellers alike. "Touring in Shanghai" takes you deeper into this vibrant city through spectacular photography, along with outlines for more than 10 different kinds of tours including a shopping tour, popular tourist sights, cultural excursions, and more. Practical information summarises accommodations, transport and dining options, and tourist maps are also included. "Touring in Shanghai" is the latest, most comprehensive travel pictorial of Shanghai available in Hong Kong.



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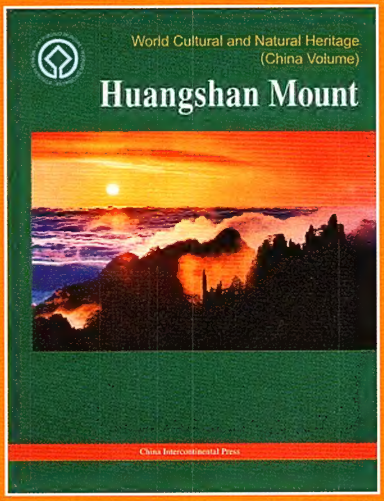
Mt. Huangshan, situated in the south of Anhui Province, is one of the most famous scenic areas in China. Being put into the World Heritage List, it is also granted with two laurels of cultural heritage and natural heritage by the UNESCO's World Heritage Commission.

The landscape of the mountain is a typical granite hoodoo landform shaped during the long geological periods by several tectonic movements in the crust. Mt. Huangshan has long been famous for its strange-looking pine trees, grotesque rocks, sea of clouds and hot springs.

All over one thousand metres above sea level, there are 77 peaks in the scenic area of almost two hundred square kilometres. Granite rock forests and rock columns together with massive rocks scatter everywhere. Moreover, Mt. Huangshan is a diverse ecosystem with a treasure of wildlife. There are approximately 1450 species of plants, 300 species of vertebrates and 170 species of birds.

Combined unique scenery and magnificent sea of clouds, the beauty of Mt. Huangshan has continued to fascinate endless visitors. Catch a glimpse of its glory in this "Huangshan Mount" pictorial that is filled with breath-taking images taken by our team of photographers!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China
CHINA TOURISM
contents 294

7 From the Editor

8 Update

10 Feature

The Invisible Great Wall

Photos & Article by Li Shaobai

The Great Wall is undoubtedly one of the grandest and most spectacular ancient structures in the world. Like an enormous dragon, it stretches from the Yalu River to the Pamir Plateau, winding over vast mountains, grasslands and deserts.

53 Calendar

54 Travel Notes

56 Discoveries

Bashi — The Song of Forbidden Love

Photos by Wu Jialin, Ou Yansheng & Li Kun   Article by Liu Yi

No one knows how many Jinuo lovers were suffered from forbidden love because of a ban on intermarriage within the same clan. These people could only express their sorrow by singing the sentimental Bashi song in the hope of union after death.

62 On the Way

The First Bend of the Yellow River

Photos & Article by Li Kesheng

The first bend of the Yellow River covers large areas of Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan provinces, and this serene place is inhabited by friendly ethnic groups.

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China

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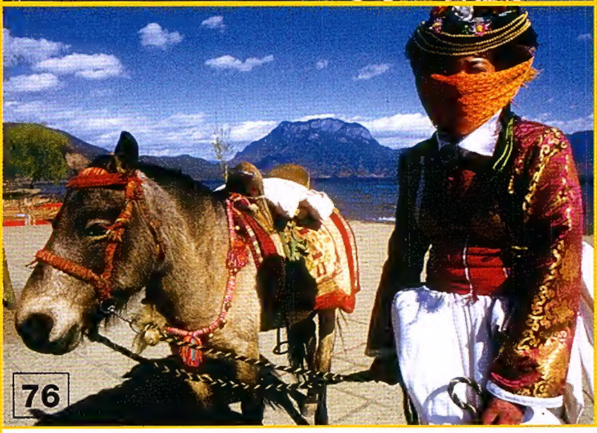
China CHINA TOURISM contents 294



66 ## Nature

The Last Black-faced Dancers: Spoonbills

Photos by Guo Yumin   Article by Di Zhiying

The black-faced spoonbills, the smallest in the Plataleidae family, are confined to the eastern fringe of the Asian coasts.

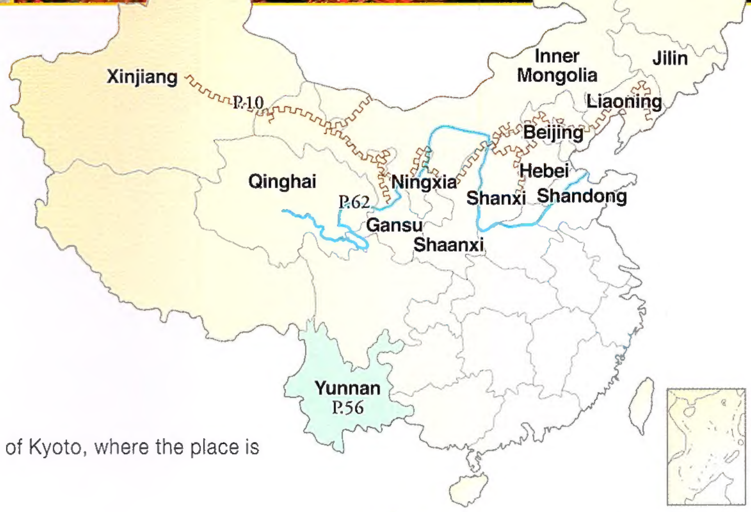
71 ## Photo Album

72 ## Photography

Shooting Maple in Kyoto

Photos & Article by Xu Xiong

Numerous people are attracted to the charming Japanese city of Kyoto, where the place is filled with blazing maple leaves in autumn.


Xinjiang
P.10
Inner Mongolia
Jilin
Liaoning
Beijing
Hebei
Qinghai
Ningxia
Shanxi
Shandong
P.62
Gansu
Shaanxi
Yunnan
P.56

76 ## Traveller's Corner

Mosuo — The Matriarchy of the Far East

Photos & Article by Patrick Blanche

80 ## Traveller's Corner

Harbin — The Winter Wonderland

Photos & Article by Mehdi Chebil Link

84 ## Feature Destination

87 ## Next Issue

CHINA TOURISM
LEAVING FOOTPRINTS OF CHINA IN YOUR HEART
THE FIRST BEND OF THE YELLOW RIVER
THE SONG OF FORBIDDEN LOVE — BASHI
THE LAST BLACK-FACED DANCERS: SPOONBILLS
THE INVISIBLE GREAT WALL
294

The Great Wall
(by Li Shaobai)

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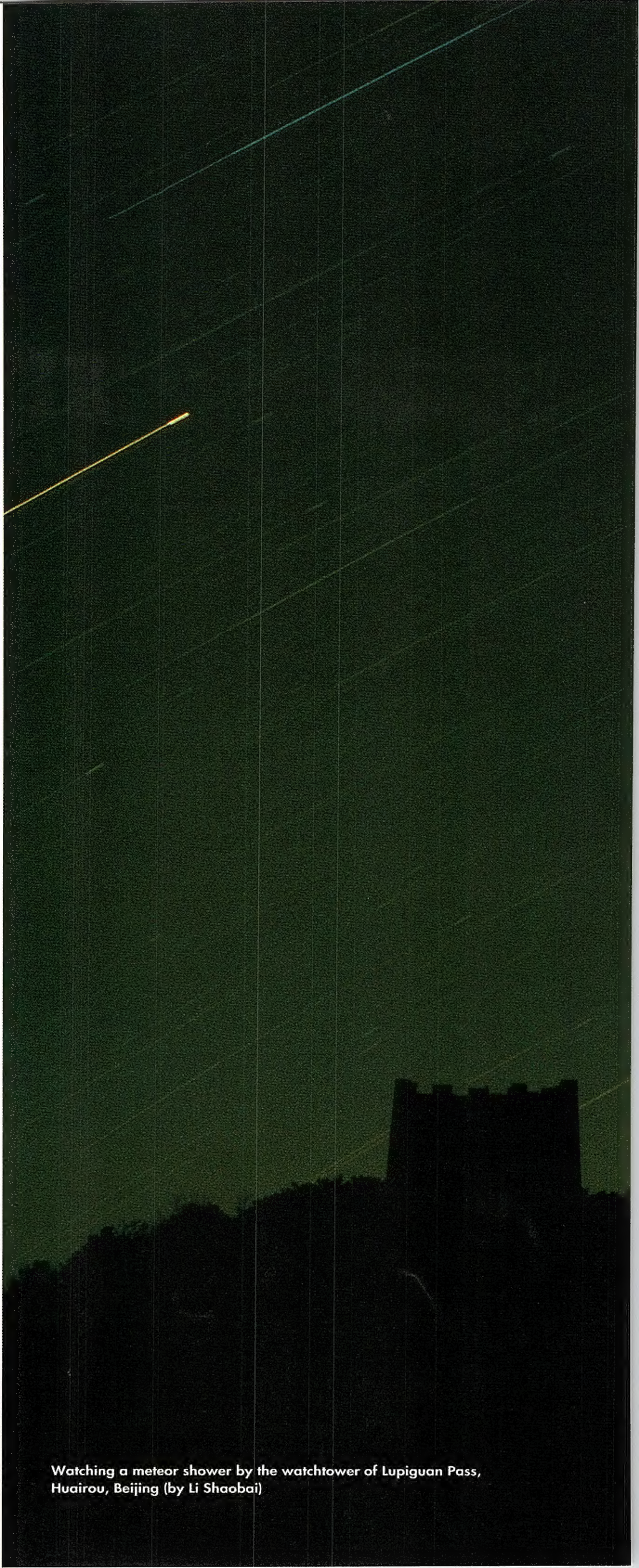
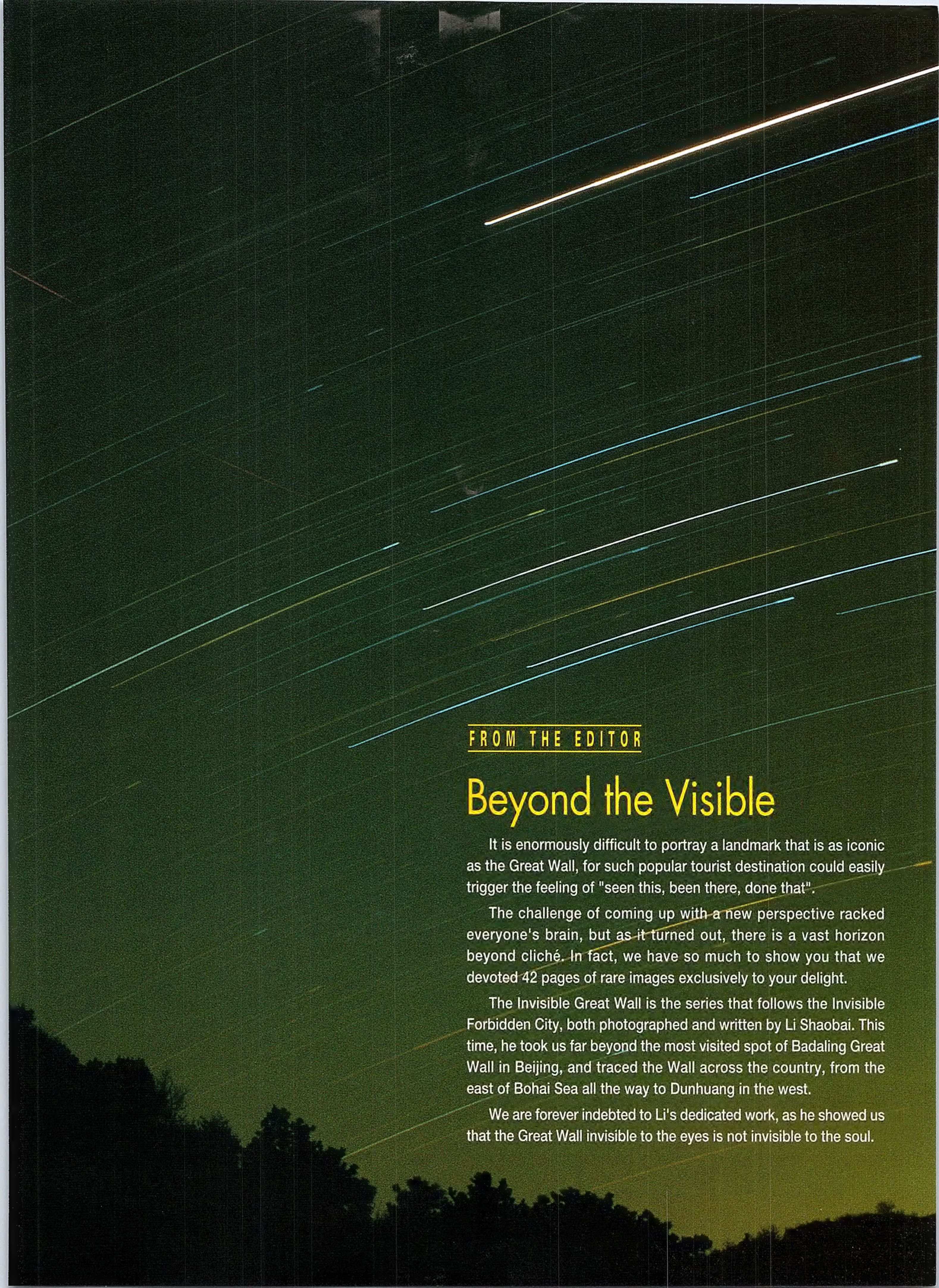


Watching a meteor shower by the watchtower of Lupiguan Pass, Huairou, Beijing (by Li Shaobai)



FROM THE EDITOR

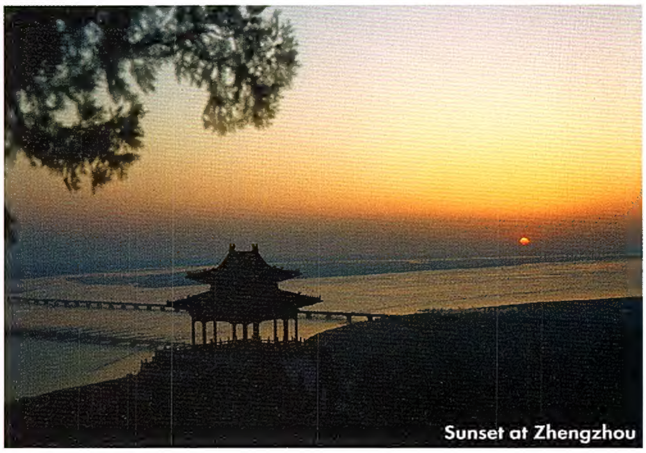
Beyond the Visible

It is enormously difficult to portray a landmark that is as iconic as the Great Wall, for such popular tourist destination could easily trigger the feeling of "seen this, been there, done that".

The challenge of coming up with a new perspective racked everyone's brain, but as it turned out, there is a vast horizon beyond cliché. In fact, we have so much to show you that we devoted 42 pages of rare images exclusively to your delight.

The Invisible Great Wall is the series that follows the Invisible Forbidden City, both photographed and written by Li Shaobai. This time, he took us far beyond the most visited spot of Badaling Great Wall in Beijing, and traced the Wall across the country, from the east of Bohai Sea all the way to Dunhuang in the west.

We are forever indebted to Li's dedicated work, as he showed us that the Great Wall invisible to the eyes is not invisible to the soul.


Sunset at Zhengzhou

Zhengzhou as China's Eighth Ancient City

The 3,600-year-old city of Zhengzhou, capital city of central China's Henan Province, has been added to China's list of ancient cities, bringing the total number to eight. The other seven cities are Xi'an, Beijing, Nanjing, Luoyang, Kaifeng, Anyang, as well as Hangzhou in Zhejiang Province.

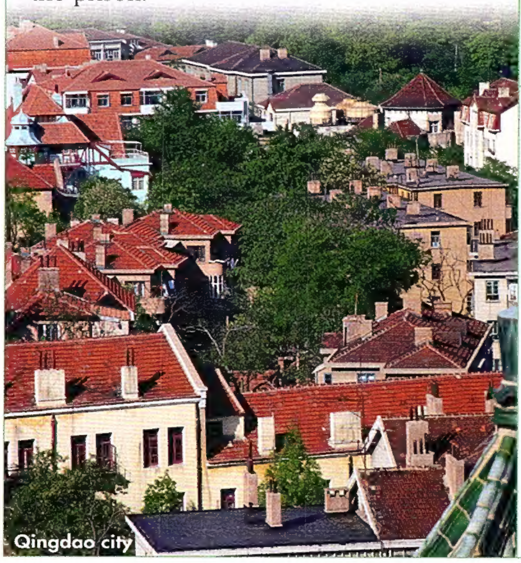
As early as 3,500 years ago, Zhengzhou had become the capital of the Shang Dynasty (16~11 centuries B.C.). Today, cultural relics and historical sites abound in and around the city, attracting more and more tourists and archaeologists both from China and abroad.

Colonial Prison Turns to Museum

Qingdao Prison, believed to be the oldest colonial prison in China, will undergo renovation as part of the country's efforts to protect cultural and historical sites.

The European-style building complex, located at No. 25 Changzhou Road, was built in 1900, when the port city was a German colony. It was a jail for convicted Europeans in colonial days, and continued to be a prison when New China was founded in 1949.

After several rounds of discussions with local historians and architects, the city government decided to turn the prison into a cultural heritage site, a tourist destination and a place for legal education. To better preserve the site, the government will demolish nearby resident houses that were inconsistent in style with the prison.


Qingdao city

Qomolangma Added to Biosphere Reserves

Two national nature reserves, Mount Qomolangma and Foping, were officially added to the world network of biosphere reserves by the UNESCO recently.

The Qomolangma Biosphere Reserve, located in the southwest corner of the Tibet, covers four counties and is the highest biosphere reserve of the world. The main protection targets of the reserve are nationally-protected animals including Himalayan Langllr, Snow Leopard, Black-headed Gull, Red Panda, Asiatic Black Bear and Blue Sheep. The Snow Leopard being the endemic species, is selected as the symbol animal of the Qomolangma Biosphere Reserve.

Foping Biosphere Reserve, which located on the south slope of central Qinling Mountains in Shaanxi, mainly protected the giant pandas and their habitats.

The Himalayas

Tomb of Qing Rebel Found in HK

The tomb of Hong Quanfu, a forgotten revolutionary, was discovered in Hong Kong's Happy Valley Cemetery recently. His grave had been untended for several decades until it was discovered by the chief curator of Hong Kong Museum of History.

Hong Quanfu was the brother of the king of the "Taiping Heavenly Kingdom", who reigned for more than a decade . Hong Quanfu was a prince of this short-lived "kingdom". When the Qing army captured the rebel capital Nanjing, he fled to Hong Kong and then Singapore in disguise. He later returned to Hong Kong and died in 1904 at the age of 68. The discovery of Hong's grave helped reinforce Hong Kong's role as the cradle of the prolonged revolution against the Qing Dynasty.

Uygur Folk Intended for UNESCO Heritage List

After the success of Kunqu and Guqin in gaining the honour of "oral and intangible heritage of humanity", the chinese government recently selected Maqam, a traditional folk music of Xinjiang's Uygur people, as the country's sole 2004 candidate in the UNESCO's Oral and Intangible List of Humanity.

Uygur people playing music

The final results will be released in July 2005. Nobody can tell exactly when was Maqam, a combination of songs, dances and instrumental music, originated. But one saying attributes it to the 16th century, when the Silk Road connected China and Europe and Xinjiang was at the forefront of cultural exchange.

Confucian Temple to Undergo Revamp

The Confucian Temple and the adjacent Imperial College in downtown Beijing, both with a history of more than 700 years, will undergo the most complete repairs in more than 50 decades.

The projects will focus on restoring the original appearance of the two ancient compounds, listed as the State-protected cultural heritage sites. Tasks will mainly include clearing weeds from the roofs, repairing broken eaves, replacing the pavement with gray bricks, protecting all the stone sections from bad weather and rehabilitating damaged paintings.

The Confucian Temple was the main venue where emperors of the Yuan (1271-1368), Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties held state sacrificial rituals to honor Confucius, whereas the Imperial College is recognized as the highest official educational institution. The repair project will cost 4 million yuan (US$480,000) and is expected to complete by mid-2006.

Afforestation Reduces Tibet's Sandstorms

A recent research showed that, afforestation projects in Tibet have led to a dramatic drop in the annual number of sandstorms in the region.

According to figures, Tibet capital Lhasa has seen the number of sandstorm days drop to 5.2 days in 2004 from 53.8 days in the early 1950s. This is mainly due to large-scale tree planting launched in the mid-1960s. Nowadays, about 13,600 ha of new forest are planted each year.

But experts also emphasise that global warming causes the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau temperature to rise gradually and windy days to reduce, which means afforestation may not be the only reason for the declining sandstorms.

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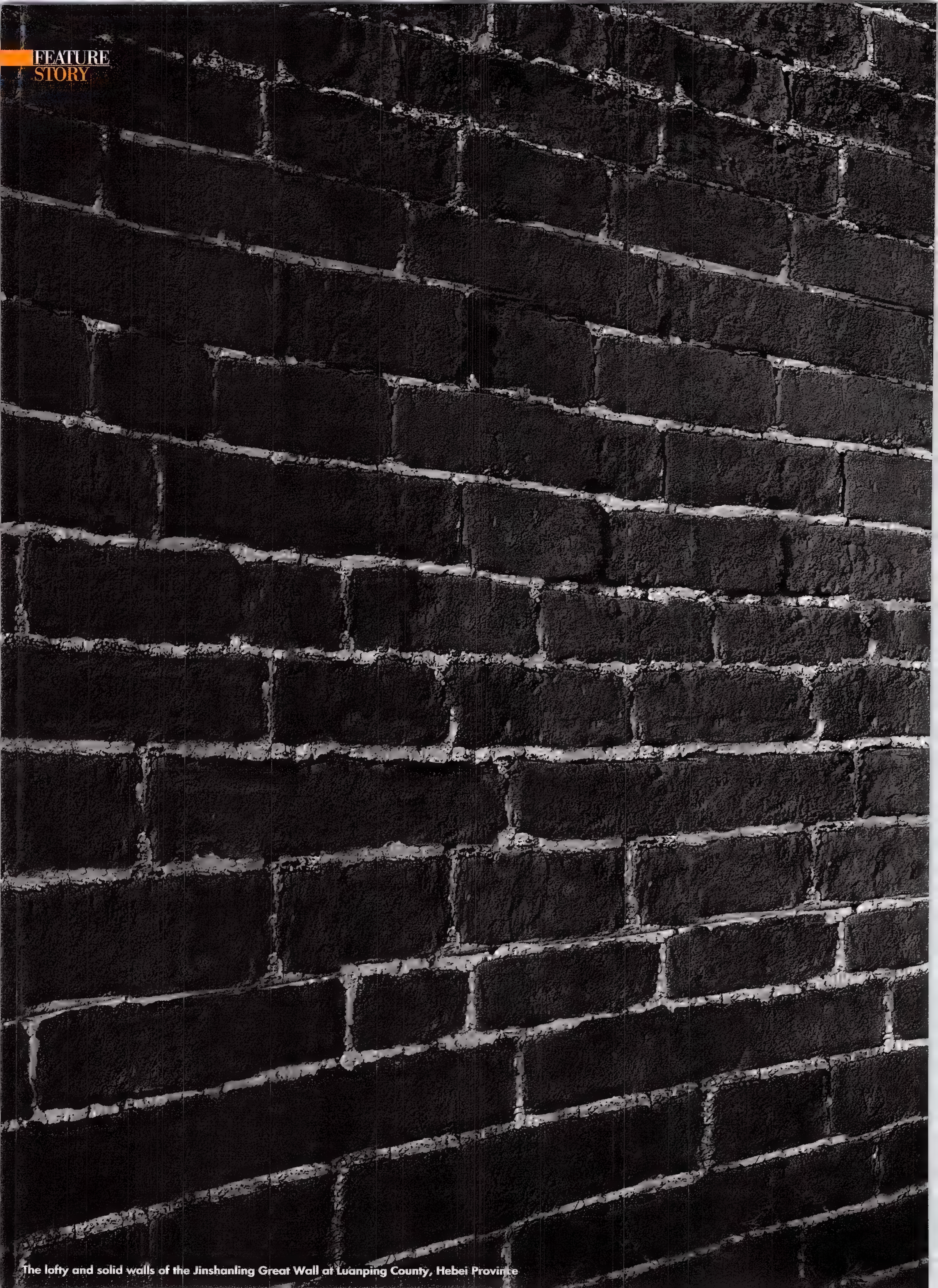
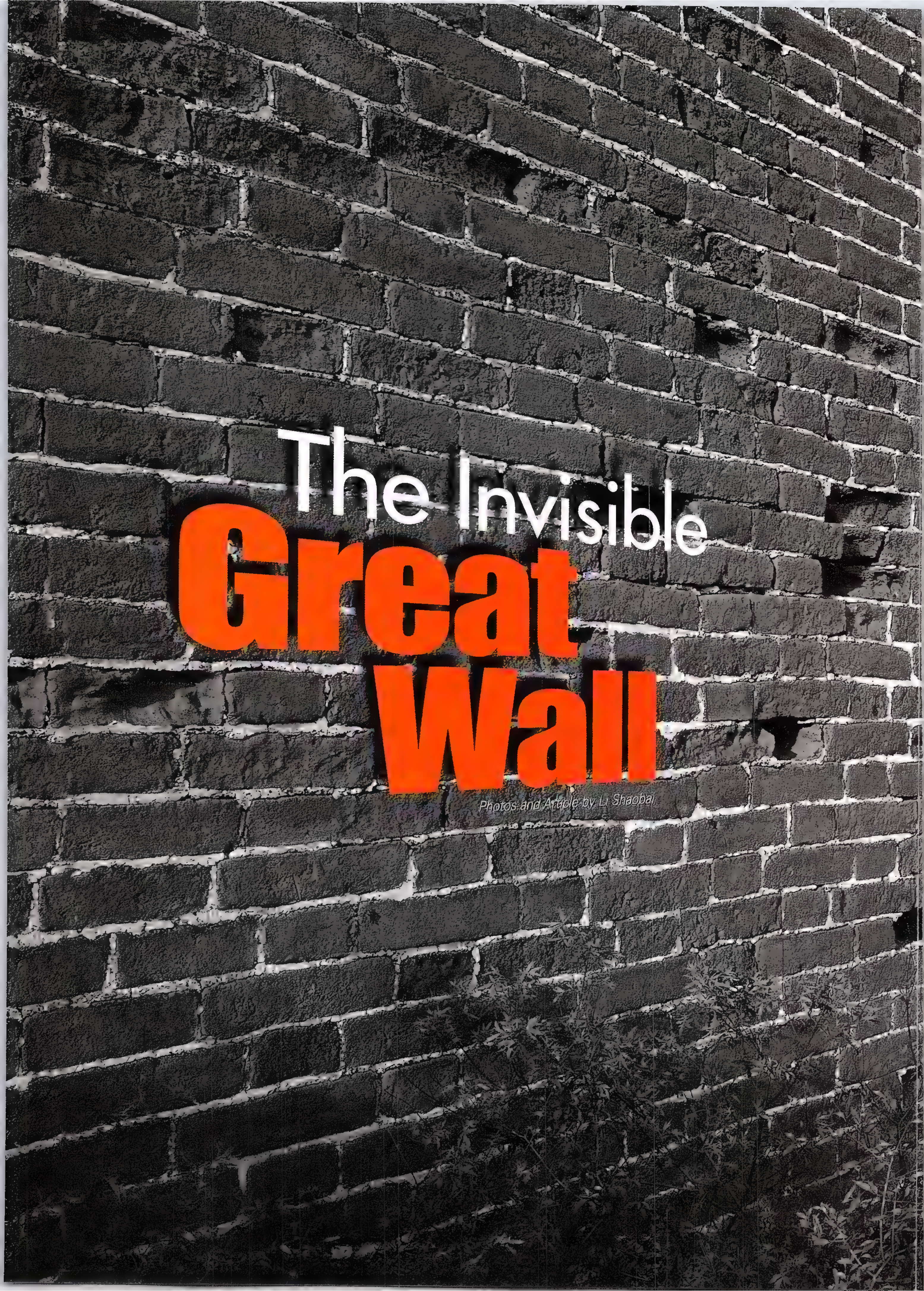
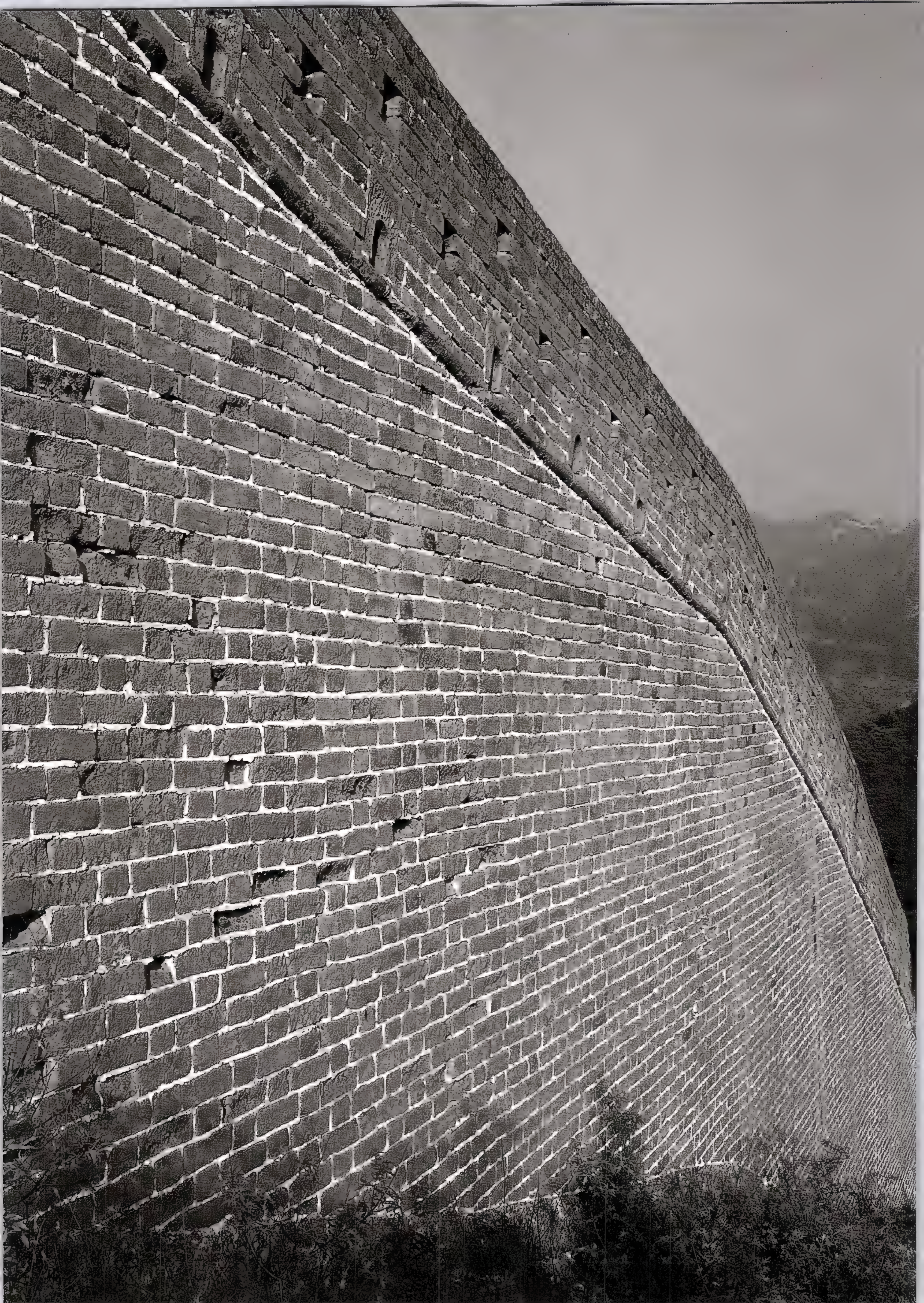


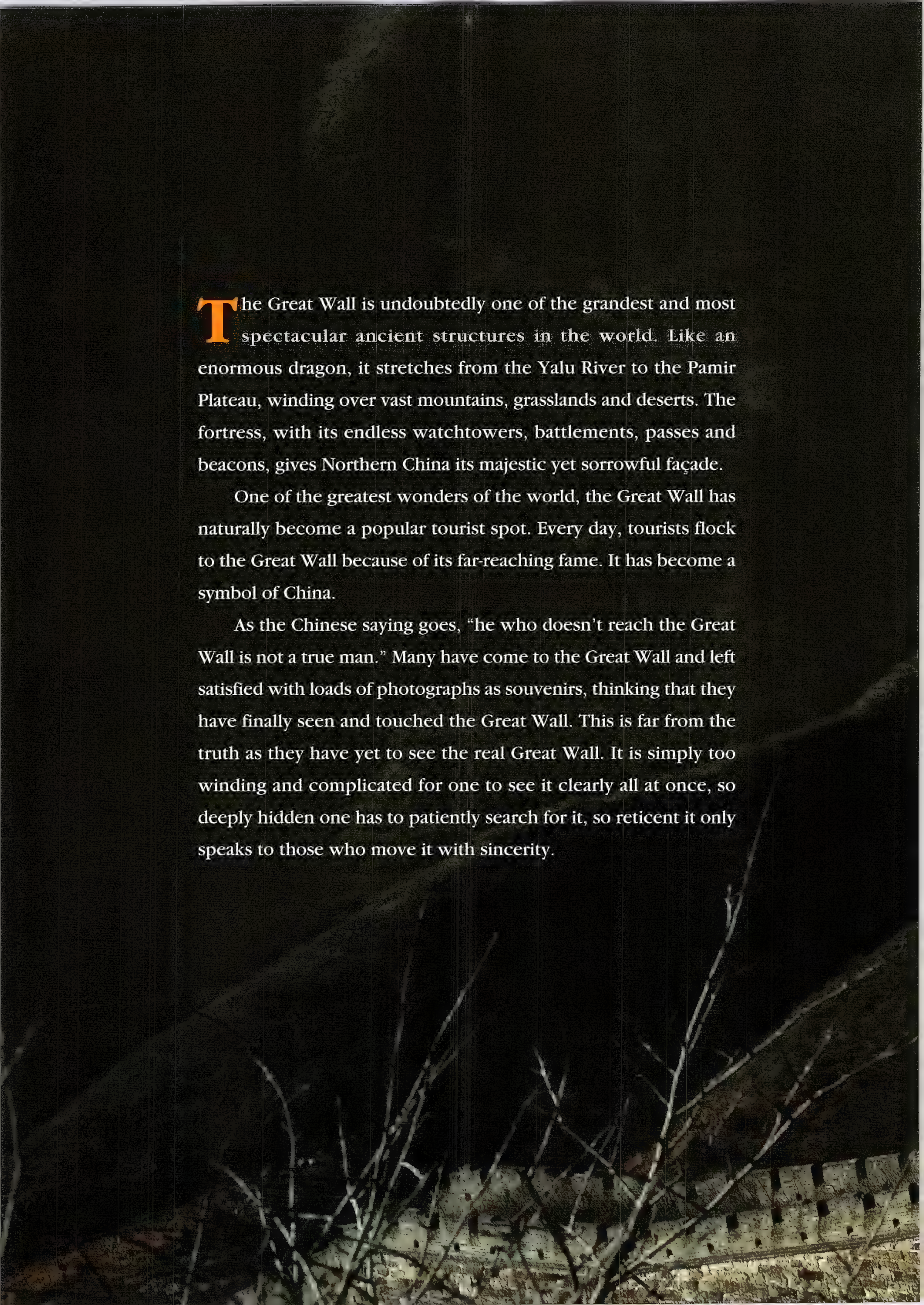
The lofty and solid walls of the Jinshanling Great Wall at Luanping County, Hebei Province

The Invisible Great Wall

Photos and Article by Li Shaobai







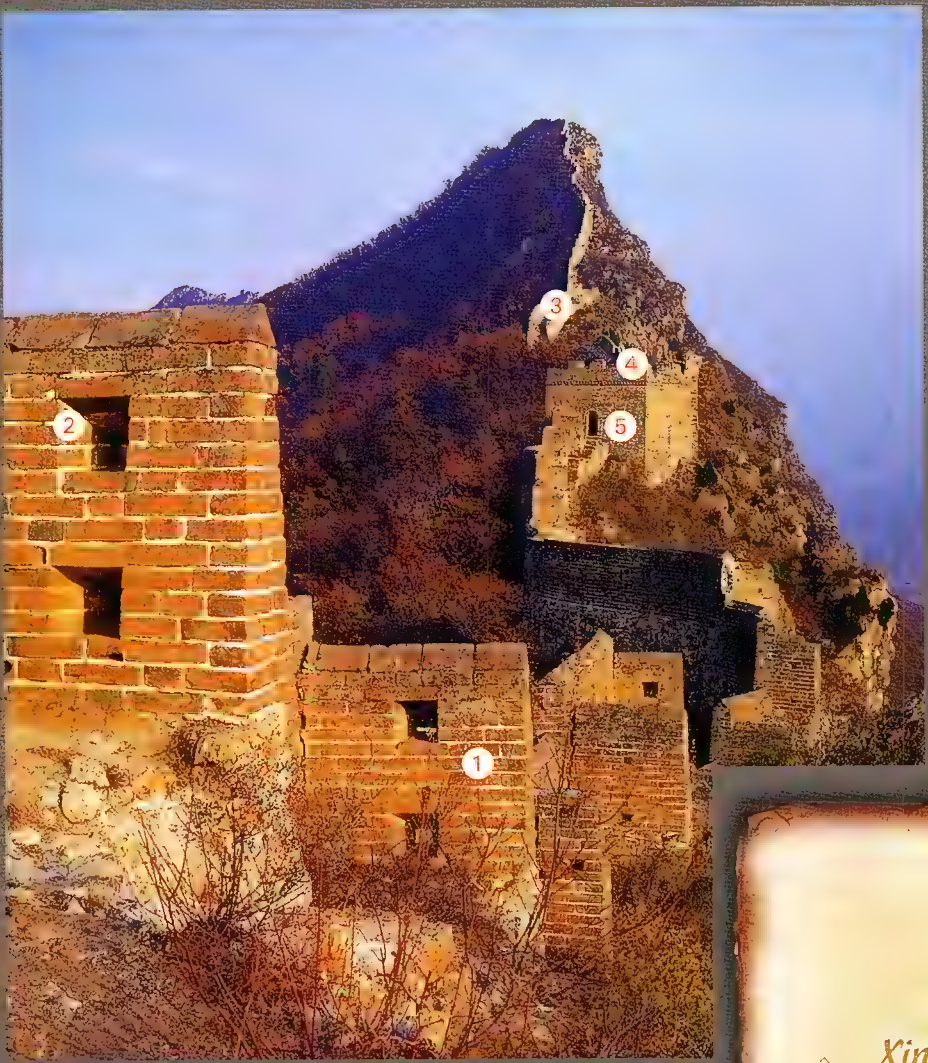
The Great Wall is undoubtedly one of the grandest and most spectacular ancient structures in the world. Like an enormous dragon, it stretches from the Yalu River to the Pamir Plateau, winding over vast mountains, grasslands and deserts. The fortress, with its endless watchtowers, battlements, passes and beacons, gives Northern China its majestic yet sorrowful façade.

One of the greatest wonders of the world, the Great Wall has naturally become a popular tourist spot. Every day, tourists flock to the Great Wall because of its far-reaching fame. It has become a symbol of China.

As the Chinese saying goes, "he who doesn't reach the Great Wall is not a true man." Many have come to the Great Wall and left satisfied with loads of photographs as souvenirs, thinking that they have finally seen and touched the Great Wall. This is far from the truth as they have yet to see the real Great Wall. It is simply too winding and complicated for one to see it clearly all at once, so deeply hidden one has to patiently search for it, so reticent it only speaks to those who move it with sincerity.

The Dazhenyu Great Wall sitting atop the cliffs resembles a snake winding through the mountains.

The Structure of the Great Wall



① Barrier Walls

This is a row of embrasured walls built vertically to the main wall, serving as a cover for the soldiers when enemy troops attacked.

② Loophole

The loophole is small outside and large inside, protecting the soldiers from the enemy's arrows while they kept watch over the enemy.

③ Horse Ramps

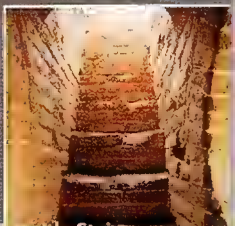
Ramps and ladders within the pass provided access to the top of the wall for both horses and men. The ramps are about four to six metres wide.

④ Crenelated Battlements

These battlements were set at a lower level for use by archers and higher up for lookouts. They provided cover for archers who were able to fire at the enemy through specially constructed slits.

⑤ Watchtowers

There are two types of watchtowers — the hollow and the solid type. They are usually square or rectangular, but very few are circular. They were used as living quarters and as storage for food, provisions and weapons. Intervals between the watchtowers can vary between ten metres to a few hundred metres. The watchtowers after the Ming Dynasty were mostly the hollow types.


Inside Stairs

Inside Structure

Xinjiang Uygur Aut. Reg.
Ming Dynasty Great Wall
Han Dynasty Great Wall
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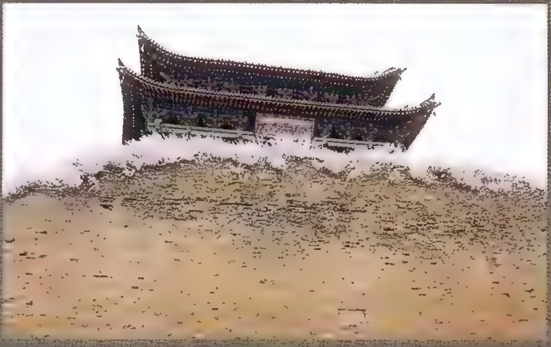
(21)
Dunhuang
Gansu
Qinghai



Passes

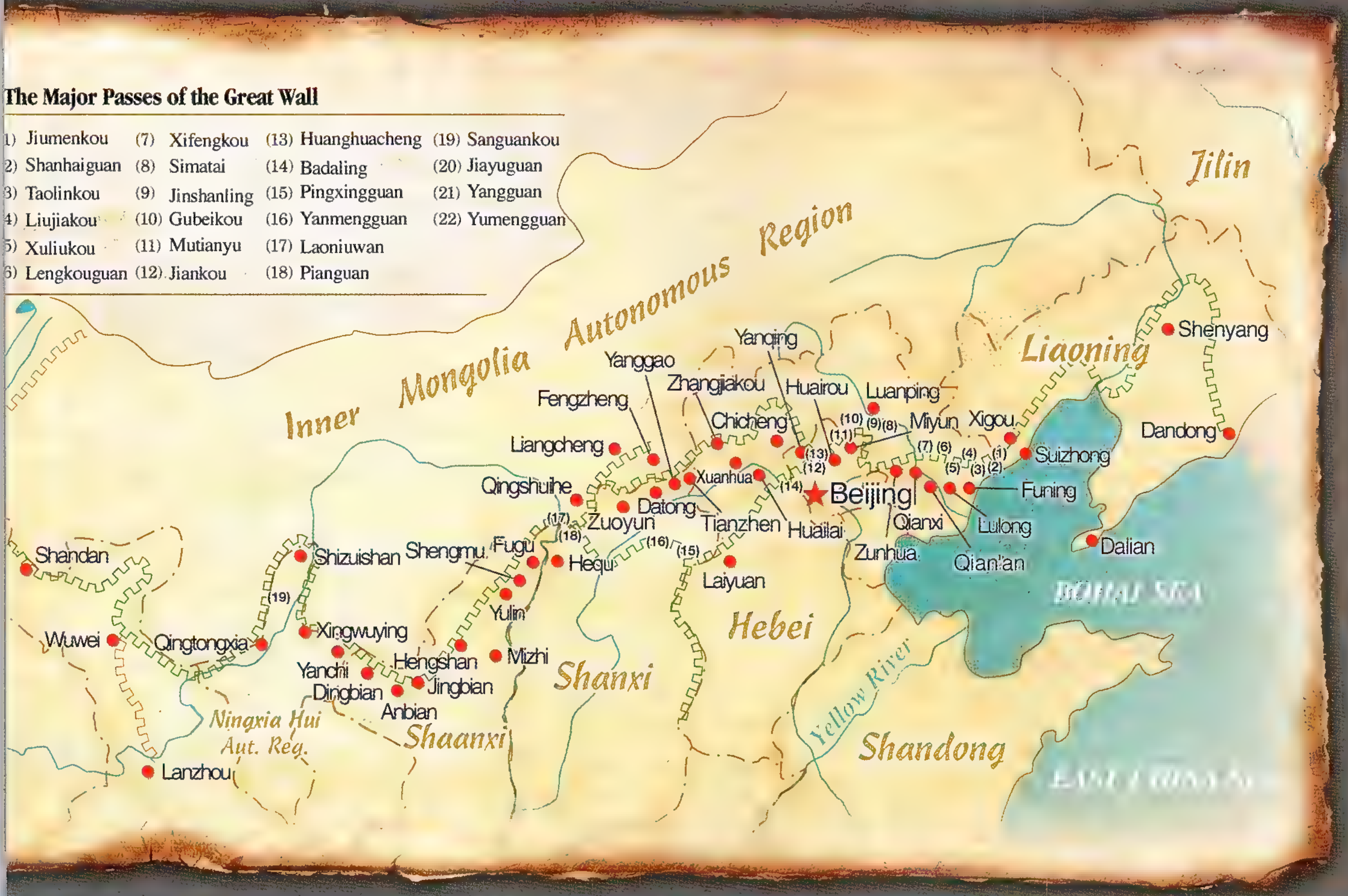
Situated at key positions such as intersections with trade routes, passes were needed to allow controlled entry and exit for both pedestrians and horse carriages. During peacetime, guards were stationed at the gates to check on merchants and civilians passing through; and during wartime, the gates were used as a defence against the enemy troops.

Beacon Towers

Mainly used to transmit information on the enemy's movement. Alarm was raised by means of smoke signals in the day and by fire at night. The number of beacon signals and cannon shots would be discharged according to the number of enemy troops spotted.

Archway

The archway provides access for soldiers to a flight of stairs leading to the top of the wall when war breaks out.



The Major Passes of the Great Wall

1) Jiumenkou
2) Shanhaiguan
3) Taolinkou
4) Liujiakou
5) Xuliukou
6) Lengkouguan
(7) Xifengkou
(8) Simatai
(9) Jinshanling
(10) Gubeikou
(11) Mutianyu
(12) Jiankou
(13) Huanghuacheng
(14) Badaling
(15) Pingxingguan
(16) Yanmengguan
(17) Laoniuwan
(18) Pianguan
(19) Sanguankou
(20) Jiayuguan
(21) Yangguan
(22) Yumengguan

Jilin
Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region
Liaoning
Shenyang
Dandong
Yanqing
Yanggao
Zhangjiakou
Huairou
Luanping
Fengzheng
Chicheng
Miyun
Xigou
Liangcheng
Suizhong
Xuanhua
Funing
Qingshuihe
Beijing
Datong
Zuoyun
Tianzhen
Huailai
Qianxi
Lulong
Zunhua
Qian'an
Dalian
BOHAI SEA
Shandan
Shizuishan
Shengmu
Fugu
Hequ
Laiyuan
Yulin
Wuwei
Qingtongxia
Xingwuying
Yanchi
Hengshan
Mizhi
Dingbian
Jingbian
Anbian
Shanxi
Hebei
Ningxia Hui Aut. Reg.
Shaanxi
Yellow River
Shandong
Lanzhou
EAST CHINA SEA

The Mighty Passes to Protect Beijing

Jizhen Great Wall

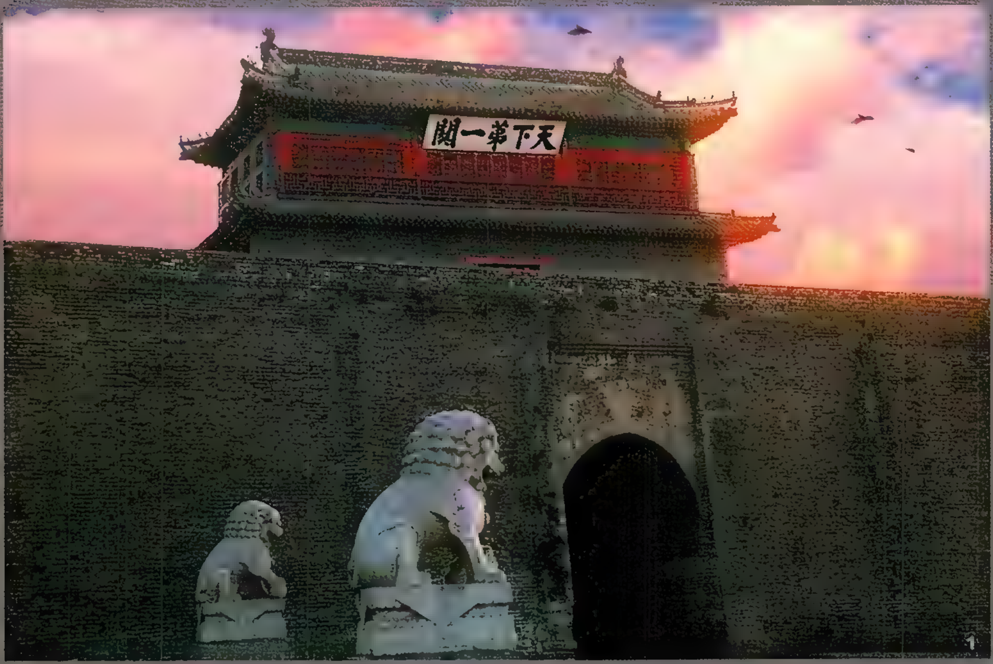
In ancient times, from Shanhaiguan Pass to Beijing was known as the Jizhen Great Wall. Badaling was one of the most important sections of the Great Wall during the Ming Dynasty. As it provided direct defence for the capital, Badaling was not only extremely solid in construction but also majestic and grand. The Jizhen Great Wall extends for almost 1,000 km. It has been restored and developed into popular tourist attractions, such as the Shanhaiguan Pass, Huangyaguan Pass, Simatai, Jinshanling, Mutianyu and Badaling.

Funing

Funing Great Wall stretches from Jiumenkou to Lulong County, covering 140 km. Some spots worth visiting: Sandaoguan Pass, Jiumenkou, Dongjiakou, Yiyuankou, Banchangyu, Naziyu and Jielingkou.

Sandaoguan Pass, six kilometres north of Shanhaiguan Pass, was constructed between stream gorges. The wall here is very steep, reaching an angle of almost 70 degrees, seemingly hanging in the air, earning the title "The Suspended Great Wall". There are three walls at Sandao Pass: the first at the mouth of the stream with a narrow gate, the second is at the middle of the stream, and the third wall is at the upper end of the stream. The third wall also had a narrow gate — hence the name (Sandaoguan Pass means "Three Walls Pass" in Chinese).

1. Shanhaiguan Pass in Qinhuangdao City is one of the most important passes of the Ming Great Wall in the eastern region.
2. Simatai was an important protective screen for defending the capital.



2

Jiumenkou is 15 km north of Shanhaiguan. It sits astride the Jiujiang River, and has nine water gates. The Jiumenkou we see today has been restored and has lost much of its former significance. An important pass leading to Shanhaiguan Pass, many battles were fought here. Although Jiumenkou has now been developed into a tourist spot, a uniquely shaped ancient beacon tower still remains about one kilometre west of Jiumenkou. It is known as the "Mother and Child Tower". The mother tower is tall and cylindrical and used to be the soldiers' living quarters. In its place now stands an old pine tree. The child tower is shorter, crescent-shaped and hugs tightly around the mother tower.

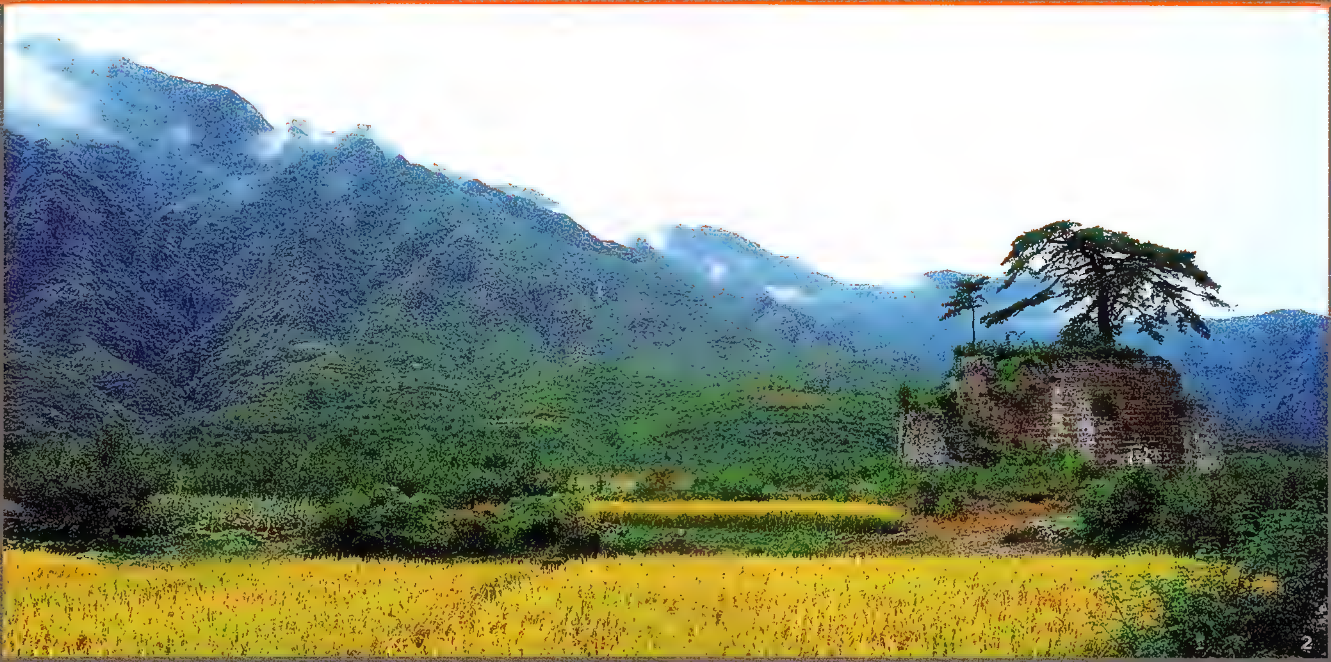
Dongjiakou Great Wall has 51 watchtowers, 28 wall towers, 16 beacon towers and three forts. The three forts, Fort Dongjiakou, Fort Damaoshan and Fort Chengziyu, were once living quarters for soldiers during the Ming Dynasty but have now become villages. Many of the villagers at Dongjiakou Village are descendants of the Ming soldiers sent here, a rare find now. Most of the watchtower rooftops have rooms constructed of brick and wood where soldiers could rest or observe the enemy.

Yiyuankou is 36 km from Qinghuangdao City. The terrain here is steep with a river between two mountains. Outside Yiyuankou, all valleys and mountaintops have stone watchtowers. The Banchangyu Great Wall and the Naziyu Great Wall are, respectively, 1.5 km north and 1.5 km south of Yiyuankou.

Banchangyu Great Wall was constructed on high terrain — four of the watchtowers are more than 700 m above sea level with the highest one 851 m. The mountain is dangerous, but breathtakingly beautiful.

Naziyu Great Wall is noted for the battlements resembling stairs on some of the towers. The walls undulate, passing through deep valleys and mountain streams — embodying the principle of "making the best use of dangerous terrain to build a strategic pass".

[illegible], 37 km north of Funing County town,



together with Gubeikou, Huangya Pass, Xifengkou and Lengkouguan Pass, were the most important passes.

Lulong

The Great Wall in Lulong County covers about 20 km, of which the Taolinkou and Liujiakou are definitely worth a visit.

Taolinkou is 34 km northeast of Lulong County Town. It had both an inner city and an outer city. However, in 1979, Taolinkou Reservoir was constructed and the outer city was inundated. The Great Wall extends along the Qinglong River. The watchtowers have been badly damaged but still preserve an air of melancholic beauty.

Liujiakou is 30 km north of Lulong County Town. There is a huge brick watchtower at the water pass, which could accommodate 100 guards. The Liujiakou water pass is one of the most well preserved water passes in Hebei.

Qianan

The Great Wall in Qianan County is 40 km long, constructed of brick and stone. Most parts have been damaged, while 44 watchtowers are still relatively well preserved. The most distinctive area is Baiyangyu, while the most important pass is Lengkouguan Pass.

[illegible], northeast of Qian'an, was both an important traffic route and a strategic military location.

1. The Great Wall winding through the Yanshan mountain range creates a wonderful combination of natural and architectural beauty.
2. The "Mother and Child Tower" near Jiumenkou is the only one of its kind and a rare sight not to be missed.

The Great Wall in Vain

During the Spring and Autumn Period, the Great Wall was already used as a protective screen. To prevent enemy troops from invading, various states started building the Great Wall in succession. However, none were able to escape their fate of being conquered by the Qin state.

After the unification of China, Emperor Qinshihuang ordered General Mengtian to attack the Xiongnu and to supervise the construction of the Great Wall. Unfortunately, by the time the Great Wall was completed, the Qin Dynasty had come to an end.

After the Qin Dynasty, almost all succeeding dynasties had done either restoration or extension works on the Great Wall, hoping that would consolidate their power and secure their throne. However, no emperor has had his hopes come true.

During the 8th year of Northern Wei Emperor Mingyuan's reign (423 AD), the over 2,000-mi stretch of the Great Wall from the east of Chicheng (Chicheng County, Hebei Province) to the west of Wuyuan (northwest Baotou, Inner Mongolia) was rebuilt and six military towns were set up at strategic locations along the wall. However, all six locations were burnt down by soldiers and peasants during a revolt, before the works were completed.

The Ming Dynasty had put in the most effort in rebuilding the Great Wall. Over more than 270 years of its reign, the Great Wall had undergone 18 major restorations. At important passes, especially the capital cities, solid and tall walls were built one after another. However, the seemingly strong and impregnable Great Wall had failed to defend its land many a times. During the 14th year of the Ming Zhentong period (1449 AD), the Wala army successfully broke through the Great Wall and captured Emperor Yingzhong, who had personally led his troops in the battle, at the Tumubao (East Huairou, Hebei). During the 29th year of the Jiajing period (1550 AD), the Tartars also attacked the Jizhen region and managed to move through Gubeikou towards the Great Wall at Beijing. In 1644, Li Zicheng led a peasant rebellion and broke through Juyongguan Pass. Within days, they managed to enter Beijing and caused the end of the Ming Dynasty.

In the morning light, the Simatai Great Wall looks magnificently grand.

Mongols entered the capital through Lengkouguan to offer tribute. The whitish Lengkouguan Great Wall resembles a giant white dragon winding around the green mountains. It is an awe-inspiring sight.

Baiyangyu is a mighty pass comparable to Lengkouguan, situated between Mt. Yanshan and Mt. Nanyuanshan, 20 km north of Qian'an City. The most distinctive feature of Baiyangyu Great Wall is the 2,100 m purple marble construction. This rare sight is definitely worth the trip. Most of the hollow watchtowers in Qian'an do not have stairs leading to the top of the tower. Instead, a skylight was constructed, and wooden or rope ladders were used to climb to the top. This meant soldiers could retreat to the top of the tower, remove the detachable ladder, and wait for assistance under attack.

Qianxi

The Great Wall in Qianxi covers about 90 km, with 74 relatively well-preserved watchtowers remaining. Some of the more distinctive spots are Qingshanguan Pass, Xifengkou and Panjiakou.

Qingshanguan Pass is 40 km north of Qianxi County near the Yanshan mountain range and Mt. Daqingshan. Qingshanguan Pass is widely visited because of Shuimen (the water gate) and the ancient fort.

The water gate was constructed on the eastern side with the cliff as its foundation. The arch was built with green bricks and the wall passes above the water gate. After hundreds of years of erosion and battle, the water gate is still relatively undamaged. Originally, there was a one-tonne copper water gate. During peacetime, it was used as a flood drainage gate, or a dam to store water. Under invasion, the gate could be suddenly raised to flush away the invaders with the stored water. Now, the copper water gate no longer exists, but the axle and the gate pillar still remain.

Xifengkou is 50 km northwest of Qianxi County. As the Luan River frequently flooded, destroying farmland and homes, the government constructed the Panjiakou Reservoir in 1976, engulfing Xifengkou and its pass.

But Xifengkou and Panjiakou Great Wall still make an occasional appearance, creating the unique and picturesque scene of a floating Great Wall.

Zunhua

The Great Wall in Zunhua covers 70 km, with 16 relatively well preserved watchtowers remaining. Some of the well-known sections are Hongshankou, Luowenyu and Malanyu.

Luanping

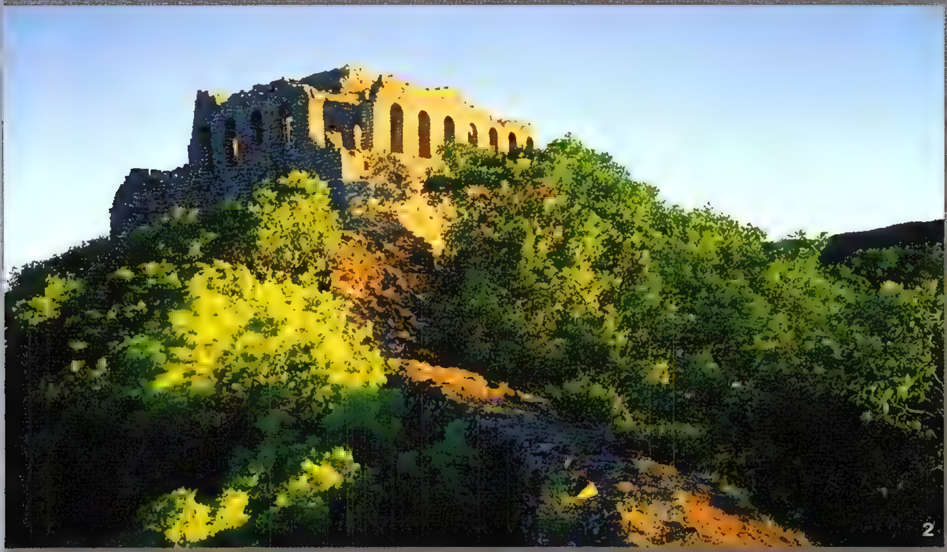
Luanping County, in Chengde City of Hebei Province, shares a border with the Miyun County. Situated at the borderline, Jinshanling is an archetypal Ming Dynasty Great Wall comparable to Badaling in grandeur. Even though Jinshanling Great Wall has been partially restored, most of it still retains its ancient flavour. The western stretch linking Gubeikou in particular is a rarely visited, simple and desolate spot.

Miyun

Miyun Great Wall covers about 100 km, with 108 relatively well-preserved watchtowers. The well-known spots include Simatai and Gubeikou.

Simatai is in the northwest of Miyun County and connects with Jinshanling. It is 5.4 km long, with 35 watchtowers. The section is exquisitely structured and uniquely designed.

At the foot of Simatai, is an extraordinary spring that is partially hot and partially cold. During the Ming Dynasty, garrison guards would often rest here. The main attractions are: Tongtian Cave, Wenzi Wall, Danbian Wall, Tianti and Wangjinglou.



Gubeikou is in the north of Miyun County. Looking west from the top of Mt. Wohushan of Gubeikou, you can see Jinshanling and Simatai.

Huairou

Huairou is in north Beijing, linking Yanqing to Miyun. Mountainous terrain is prevalent, and the wall here covers 36 km, with 59 relatively well-preserved watchtowers.

Mutianyu Great Wall in Huairou is now a popular tourist spot. Other interesting spots that have yet to be developed are: Hefangkou, Jiankou, Dazhenyu and Huanghuacheng.

Hefangkou is easily accessible. The walls extend evenly from both sides of the pass, winding over the ridges. The wall here may have collapsed in ruins but is still spectacular. Every late April, when the blossoming peach and apricot cover the entire mountain, the view is breathtaking.

Mutianyu Great Wall is 20 km from Huairou County Town. It has tough inner and outer walls laid with 13 layers of green granite stone blocks as foundations. Walls were also built on the high mountain ridges, with watchtowers constructed at intervals of around 10 m.

West of the restored section of Mutianyu Great Wall, the climb gets higher and wilder. At Niujijiaobian, the wall descends from the east mountain and ascends over 1000 m to the peak,

1. Interior view of a watchtower in the western stretch of Jinshanling.
2. Jiuyanlou watchtower, meaning "Nine-eyed Tower".
3. The Panjiakou Great Wall has been engulfed by the reservoir. During dry seasons, part of the wall can be seen floating above the water.

then turns back sharply before dipping downhill again. As it is shaped like a cow's horn, it was named Niujiaobian (Ox Horn Wall). The view of the Great Wall on the steep mountain cliffs is overwhelming.

Jiankou Great Wall was constructed on precipices and cliffs, making a dangerously enthralling sight.

After Jiankou, the wall passes through Tianti, where it climbs 1,004 m above sea level. Locals call this stretch "Ying Fei Dao Yang", which means "even the eagles have to look up when they fly past", an indication of how dangerously high it sits.

Then comes Mt. Songshuding known as "Beijingjie". From here, the wall splits into two, one moving northward and the other moving westward. The stretch extending west, called the inner Great Wall, passes through Dazhenyu and Huanghuacheng, straight towards Badaling; the other stretch goes north, called the outer Great Wall, and passes through Heitoushan and Jiuyanlou. It then heads northwest towards Chicheng, and passes through Xuanhua and Zhangjiakou before entering the Shanxi Province.

Dazhenyu is in the southwest of the Jiankou Great Wall. Today, the brick arch door at Dazhenyu is still accessible. Made of stone, the wall is in good condition. The steep mountain terrain around makes the journey arduous, but very interesting and exciting. We made our way to the watchtower 1,000 m above sea level, known as Xidalou, and the view was splendid. We could see Lianyunling Great Wall, Heitoushan, Jiankou and even Mutianyu at one glance.

Huanghuacheng Great Wall, located northeast of Huairou, is 60 km from Beijing City and covers 10.8 km. Huanghuacheng Pass sits on a strategically important point between Gubeikou and Juyong Pass. On the east side of the pass is Huahuacheng Reservoir. A major part of the dam was built using stone slabs from the Great Wall. The Huanghuacheng, together with neighbouring Zhuangdaokou and Xishuiyu Great Wall, is a great place to see the un-restored Great Wall at its most barren and impoverished.

Yanqing

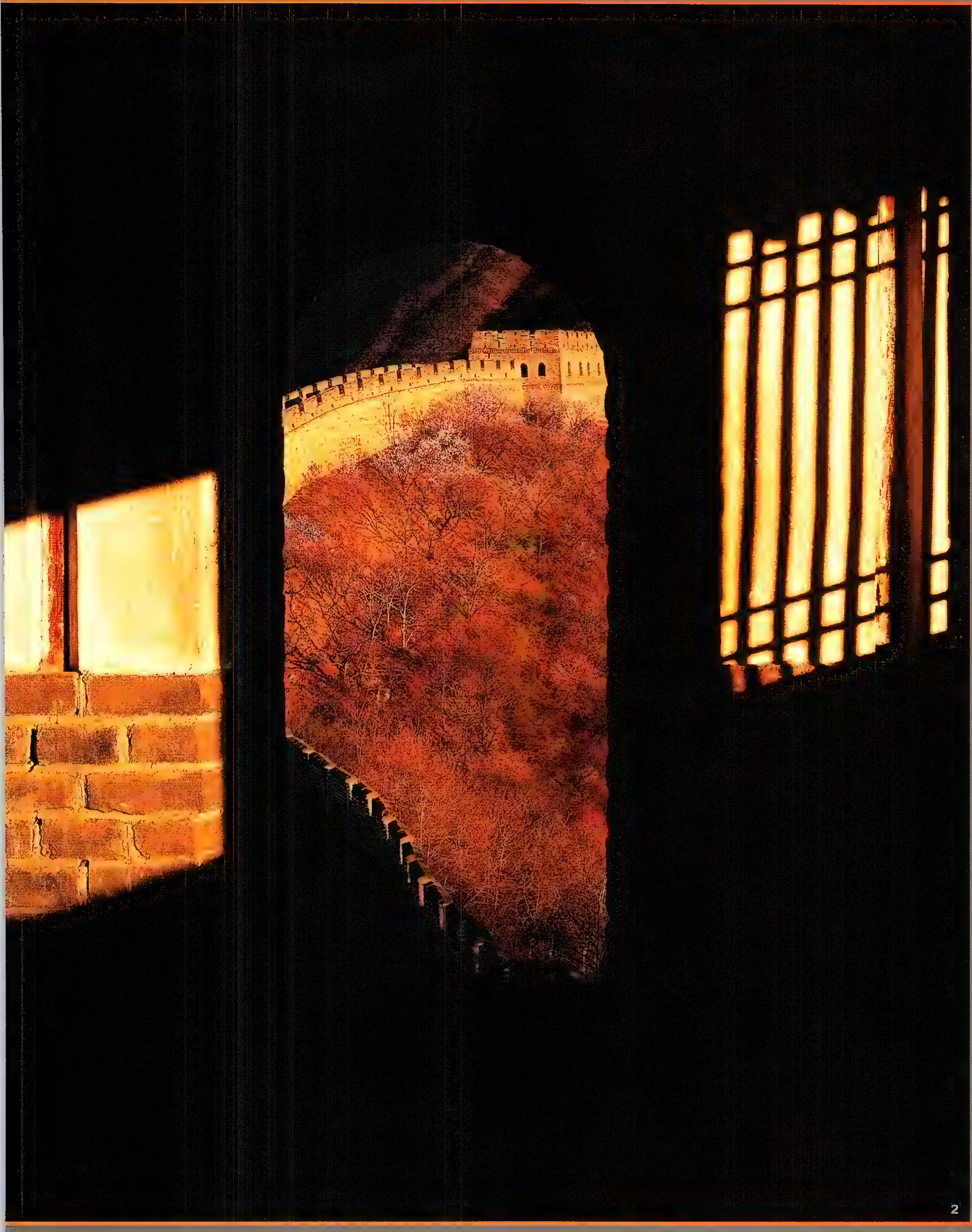
The inner Great Wall in Yanqing County is split into two: the north wall extends to Yanqing from Jiuyanlou, passes Baihebao and moves towards Chicheng. The stretch here covers 61 km and has only one relatively well preserved watchtower. The south wall extends west towards Longquanyu in Yanqing from Xishuiyu in Huairou. It passes Shifosi, Qinglongqiao, Badaling and Shixia before heading west and extending into Huailai County in Hebei. The south stretch covers 52 km and has 33 well-preserved watchtowers remaining.

The most well known spot in Yanqing is Badaling Great Wall. The first section to be developed, Badaling Great Wall is very well known. However, most people are still unfamiliar with its neighbours in the east and west — the Shifosikou and the Shixiaguan Pass.

Shifosikou, east of Badaling, was constructed during the reign of Emperor Yongle of the Ming Dynasty. Originally, there was a water gate at the pass. Now, the pass and the gate are both badly damaged. The entire stretch of the Great Wall from Shifosikou, Qinglongqiao to Badaling was constructed in stone and remains in good condition, except for some collapsed sections. This section is as lofty and grand as Badaling.

Shixiaguan Pass, five kilometres southwest of Badaling, was under the Badaling defence system during the Ming Dynasty, deeply hidden in the mountains. During the 17th year of Emperor Chongzhen's reign (1644 AD), Li Zicheng led an army into Beijing. He first attacked Badaling, but was unable to break through even after sacrificing many of his men. Having no better solution, he accepted an idea from the locals and attacked Shixiaguan Pass instead. General Tang Ying was fooled into leaving his fort. Li Zicheng took the opportunity to break through and enter Beijing. Being a part of history naturally makes Shixiaguan Pass a place of interest to tourists.

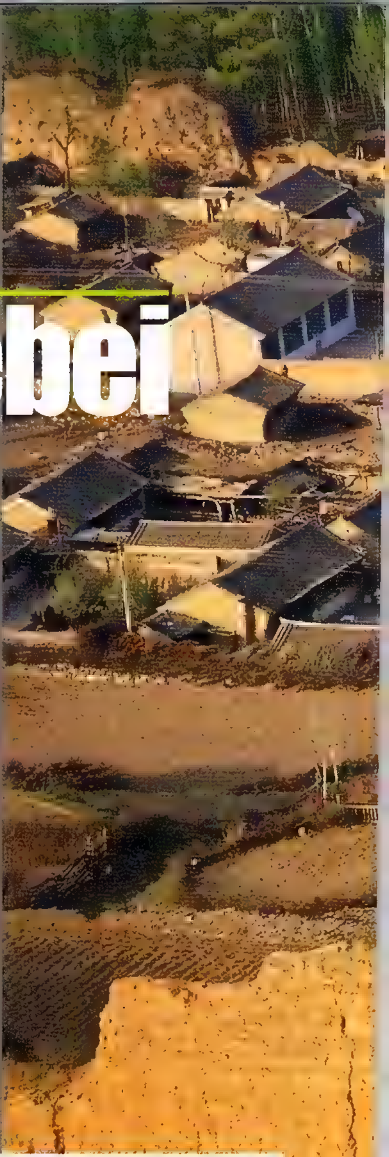
1. The dangerously enthralling Jiankou Great Wall
2. A watchtower at the Mutianyu Great Wall. The windows are exquisitely and beautifully designed.



2

Deploying The Troops in Two Directions

The Great Wall in Hebei



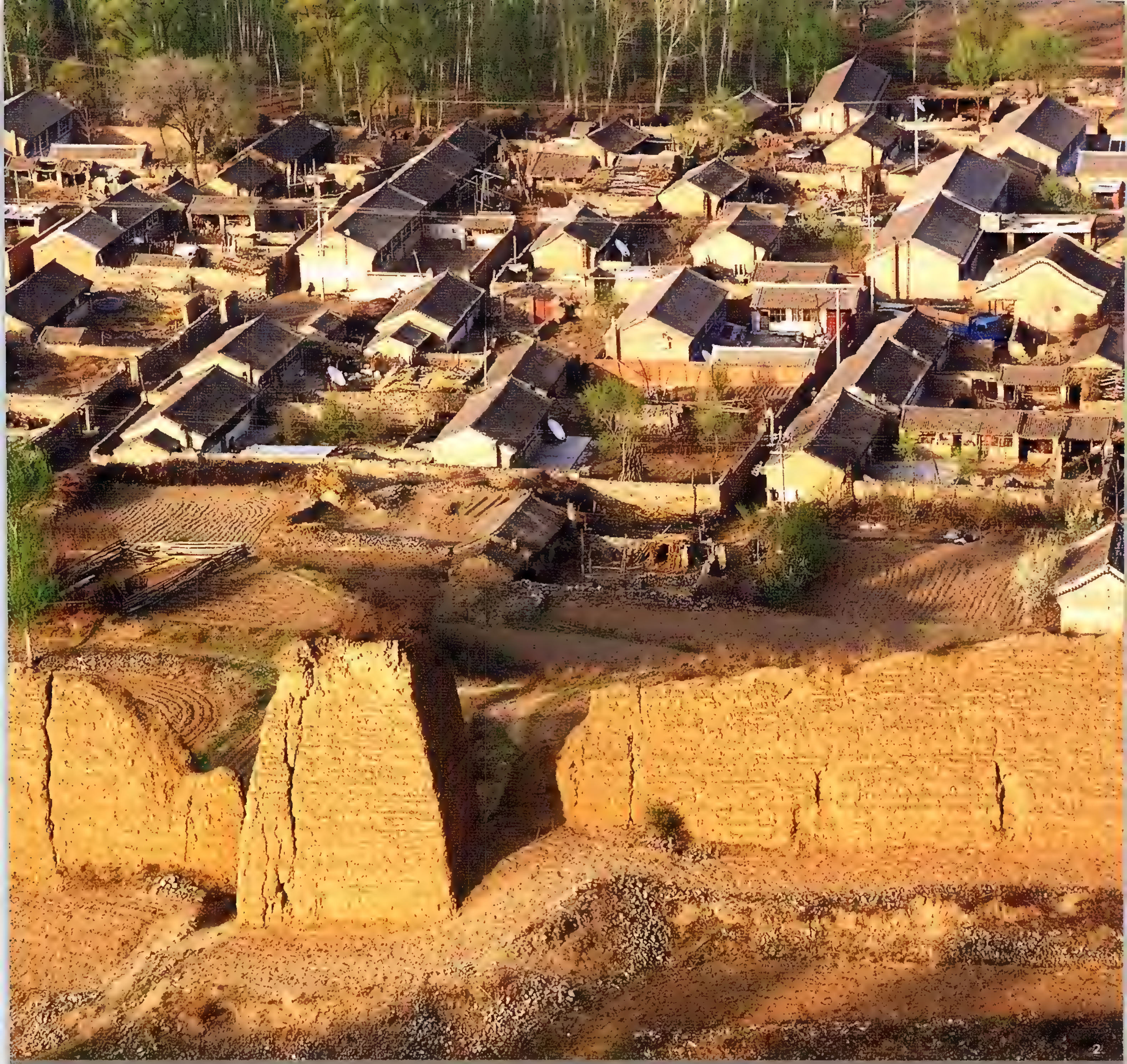
The Great Wall in Beijing splits into two at Mt. Songshuding in Huairou: the inner and the outer. They extend towards western Hebei Province and the north respectively. The outer wall passes for 400 km through Yanqing, and finally extends into Tianzhen, Shanxi. The inner Great Wall sets off from Badaling, passes Shixia Great Wall and heads southwest towards Huailai County and Mt. Dongling. From there, it heads south to Lingqiu County in Shanxi Province.

Outer Great Wall

The Northern Hebei Great Wall, also known as the outer Great Wall, was under the Xuanfu Garrison. In order to protect its territory from remnants of the old Yuan Dynasty forces, the Ming Dynasty constructed nine zones, the so-called "Jiubian"(note), of which the Xuanfu Garrison was one of the most important.

Jimingyi was one of the most important military post-houses in the Xuanfu Garrison. The largest post-house between Xuanfu and the capital, it is also the largest and best preserved in China. In 1900, Empress Dowager Cixi passed while fleeing the Western allied forces attacking Beijing. The house where she dwelt is still standing. There is another interesting fact about Jimingyi: if you throw stones at the northeast wall, it creates sounds resembling chickens clucking. How it does so is still a mystery today.

1



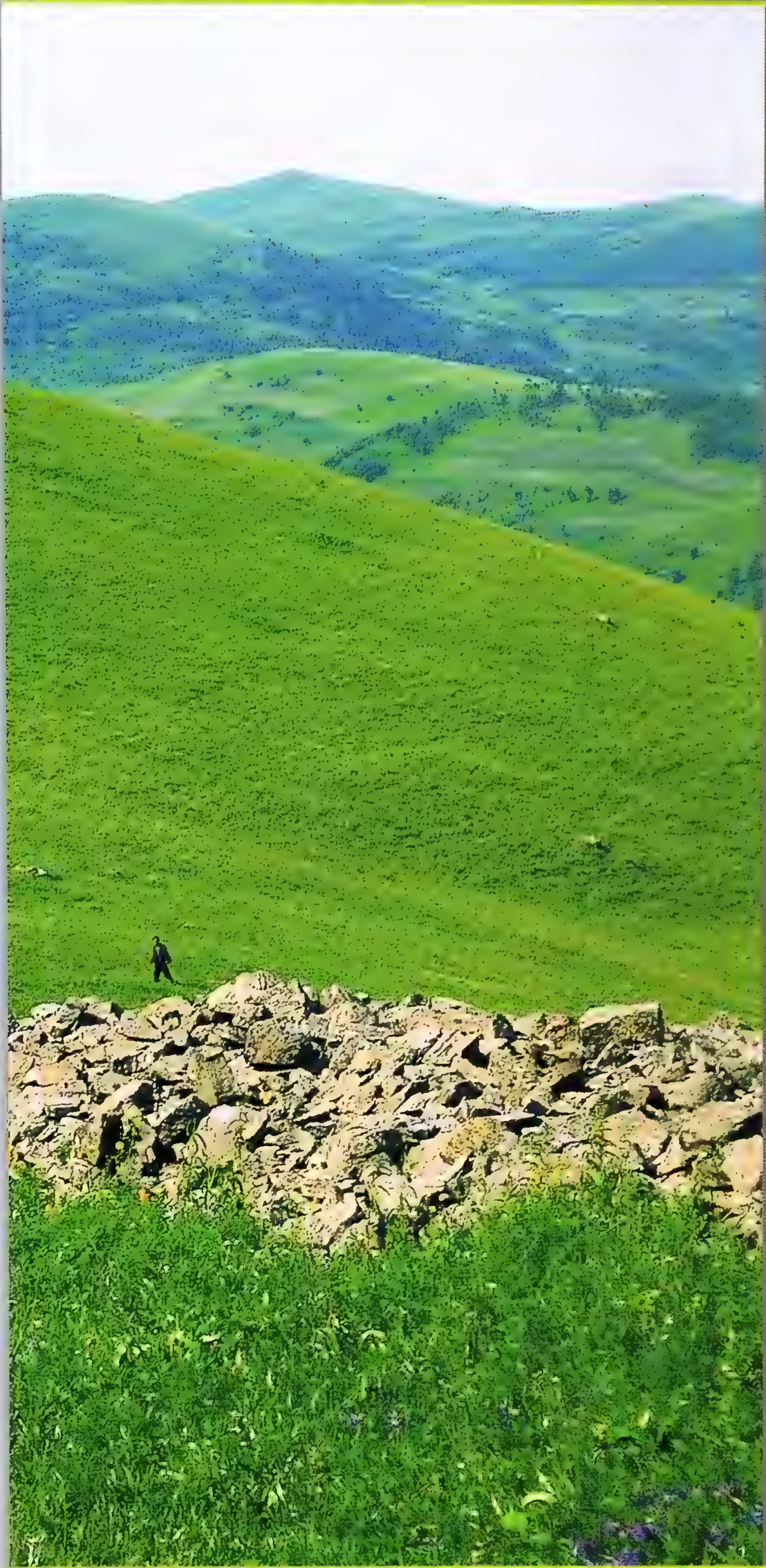
2

Fort Changshendi is in Changshendi Village in Chicheng County. The rectangular fort is 500 m long and 11.5 m high. An exquisitely structured brick watchtower, Zhenfanglou, is located southwest of Fort Changshendi. The foundation of the watchtower was constructed with brick slabs and the lower tower is ramparted with green bricks. Measuring 10.1 m high, 7.9 m wide and 11 m long, it is divided into two levels. With its unique structure, Zhenfanglou is an excellent piece of work.

Fort Dushikou sits north of Xuanfu Garrison and serves as a turning point for the outer Great Wall leading southeast. It is one of the most strategically located passes. The fort was named after a solitary rock found south of the fort that has a diameter of 8.5 m and occupies an area of 78 m². A temple was once constructed on the rock during the Ming Dynasty but no longer exists. However, there are eight elm trees surrounding the rock. This rock gives Dushikou an air of mystical charm.

Note: The Nine Zones and eleven garrisons. For effective defence along the northern frontiers, the Ming authorities divided the entire Great Wall belt into nine zones, known as Jiuzhen, and placed each under the control of a garrison. They were the Liaodong Garrison, Ji Garrison, Xuanfu Garrison, Datong Garrison, Shanxi Garrison, Yulin Garrison, Ningxia Garrison, Guyuan Garrison and the Gansu Garrison. Two more garrisons were added later — Chang Garrison and Zhenbao Garrison. Thus the defence system consisted of eleven garrisons in nine zones.

1. The area beside the watchtower by the Fort Geyu of Xuanhua County is now used by farmers.
2. Fort Changshendi, Chicheng County



Inner Great Wall

The stretch in Laiyuan County is the most well preserved part of the inner Great Wall and is definitely worth a trip.

Laiyuan County is between Taixing Mountain and Jibei Mountain in west Hebei. The wall here covers 90 km and is the most interesting stretch of the Inner Great Wall. Two places worth going are Baishikou and Wulonggoukou.

Baishikou is at the foot of Mt. Baishi, 14 km from the County Town. At 2,018 m, it is known as "Northern Yellow Mountain". The passes, watchtowers and wall at Baishikou are all well preserved. A cobblestone walkway adds a very ancient flavour.

Wulonggoukou Great Wall, on the Wulong River 40 km northeast of the County Town, is surrounded by tall mountain ranges. Its 20 km of brick walls and battlements still remain in good condition. Constructed along the mountain ridges, it looks exceptionally beautiful against the backdrop of nature.

1. The ancient stone-built Great Wall in Chongli County meanders along the mountain ranges towards the west.
2. The Dushikou Great Wall in Chicheng County

The Forts Meet the Yellow River

The Great Wall in Shanxi & Inner Mongolia

Shanxi was always an area of conflict between the Han Chinese and the nomadic Mongols, and the Great Wall became a crucial defence. During the early years of the Ming Dynasty, the army relentlessly attacked the remnant Mongol forces, and built the outer Great Wall, using earth and stone slabs. At the same time, a defence system of hereditary military service was set up to guard the border from generation to generation. After Ming Emperor Chengzu moved the capital to Beijing, successive emperors added the inner Great Wall as a second defence.

Tianzhen

The Great Wall in Shanxi starts from Tianzhen County in the east. **Remains of the Han Great Wall** stretch for five kilometres at the border of Fort Pingyuan and Xiyang River, Huaian County. **Remnants of the Northern Wei Great Wall** stretch for six kilometres from Fort Xinping to Pingyuan, mostly in ruins. **The Ming Great Wall** starts from Pingyuan in the east and connects at Yanggao County in the west. There are 30 km of well-preserved wall and an abundance of apricot trees in the stretch between Baiyangkou and Lierkou. The blossoming apricot in April against the backdrop of the ancient wall makes a beautiful scene.

Yanggao

The 50 km of wall in Yanggao County joins Tianzhen in the east, ending at Yuandun Village in Datong County. A total of 119 watchtowers and beacon towers remain.

Datong

Datong is in Shanxi Province, joining Mt. Taixing in the east with the Yellow River in the west. It was an area fought over often throughout history. The Great Wall in Datong is divided into the outer Great Wall to Zuoyun, and the inner Great Wall, which

1. Sitting atop the Great Buddha statues at the Datong Yungang Grottoes, the beacon towers guard over them.
2. This beacon tower was built on a steep cliff about 100 m high from the Yellow River.

2

1

2

passes through Lingqiu and Hunyuan.

Datong is a mountainous region and the walls intertwined with one another. The stretch from **Fort Zhenbianpu** to **Fort Zhenchuanpu** was constructed of loess and is quite sturdy. The manmade damage is minimal. As the terrain here is relatively flat, huge beacon towers were constructed close to each other to strengthen the defence. **Fort Hongcipu** may have been damaged and its original façade lost, but the walls near the fort winding up and down give an air of desolate magnificence. **Fort Deshengpu** is quite well preserved. The walls and the passes still remain in good condition, especially the south pass. The elaborate stone engravings above its entrance are still intact even after hundreds of years of erosion.

Within Datong, **Fort Zhumapu** near the world-famous Yungang Grottoes is not to be missed. The panorama of beacon towers and grottoes here is unique. According to records, five grottoes were excavated at the Mount Wuzhou west of Datong, presided over by an eminent monk Tanyao, during the second year of the Northern Wei Xingan period (453 AD). The "Five Grottoes of Tanyao" are the earliest excavated Yungang Grottoes, known for their five Great Buddha statues. The view of the beacon towers above the Great Buddhas is spectacular.

There is a famous pass here named **Shahukou**. The terrain is steep and dangerous, and Shahukou was a military stronghold, seeing many battles. During the Jiajing period of the Ming Dynasty, a concubine of Xinai, son of Mongolian nobleman Andahan, had an affair with a chieftain under Xinai and sought refuge with the Ming Dynasty after being discovered. A furious Xinai led an attack and surrounded Youyun City barely 10 m from Shahukou. The Ming army put up a strong fight for a few months, but depleted their provisions. Yang Bo, the Minister of War, personally led an army to defeat the Mongols. From then on, the Ming Dynasty paid more attention to defence at Shahukou and renovated the wall.

3

Zuoyun

The Great Wall in Zuoyun County is constructed of earth and remains in good condition. There are two places not to be missed here. An old **Catholic Church** on a hill at Bataizi Village still stands next to the wall today, despite heavy manmade destruction. Most of the villagers here are Catholics. Near Bataizi Village is a brick watchtower, named Zhenninglou. It is one of the best-preserved watchtowers in Hebei or Shanxi.

1. A beacon tower near the Pianguan Pass braves the wind and snow.
2. A ruined watchtower in a buckwheat field at the Liusumu region near Liangcheng, Inner Mongolia
3. Shanxi Datong was a strategic link that leads from Mongolia to Shanxi, Hebei, Shandong and Hennan in ancient time. It was a prime land fought over by many throughout history. The Fort Zhenbianpu near Datong.
4. The ancient Catholic Church beside the Bataizi Village Great Wall in Zuoyun County is left in ruins. It is one of the rare sights along the Great Wall of China. Many villagers are Catholics.

4

The Bailangou Great Wall is situated at the border between Qingshui County, Inner Mongolia and Pianguan County, Shanxi Province with tall and lofty watchtowers and linking walls.

The Great Wall in Shanxi & Inner Mongolia

Qingshuihe

The Great Wall extends into Qingshuihe County in Inner Mongolia where there are three routes covering 20 km. Most of the wall here is constructed from loess. The many different types of crops grown around **Bailangou Great Wall** make the place look like an oil painting during autumn.

Pianguan Pass and Laoniuwan

Pianguan Pass is east of the Yellow River in Shanxi Province. Looking like a human head, it was named Piantouguan Pass (meaning "Slanted Head Pass") and was one of the "Outer Three Passes" of the Ming Great Wall. The defence at Pianguan was very tight as it was a historical military battleground and a troop station. Looking east from Pianguan, the wall is complicated and winding, and the beacon towers and forts overlap one another; looking

west, the majestic view of both the Yellow River and the Great Wall is breathtaking.

The most interesting place along Pianguan Great Wall is **Laoniuwan**. On the border between Pianguan and Inner Mongolia, it is where the Yellow River and the Great Wall meet. The Yellow River turns a corner and flows through the deep mountains and canyons down towards the south, while the Great Wall meanders east. With the completion of the Wanjiazhai Hydropower Station, the Yellow River has been tamed. From Laoniuwan, you can catch the peaceful view of the shiny and reflective Yellow River. The most famous spot here is the Laoniuwan Beacon Tower constructed on a precipice, known as Wanghelou or Hushuilou. The 400-year-old beacon tower was an observation post for enemy movements along the river and smoke was used to transmit information on enemy movements. Today, the view is a picture postcard look at the Yellow River, the Great Wall and the beauty of nature. Fort Laoniuwan, constructed during the ninth year of the Ming Dynasty Chongzhen period still stands today. Inside the fort is a green brick street, 300 m long and 15 m wide, with more than 20 storerooms, two temples and two ruined towers.

2

1. The Great Wall at Shiyan Village of Qingshuihe County, Inner Mongolia
2. The terrain at Fort Laoniuwan is high and steep. A watchtower named Wanghelou still remains north of the fort.
3. The south entrance of Fort Desheng. The elaborate stone engravings above its entrance still remain in good condition.

Escape Prevention and Trafficking Control

It seems the Ming Dynasty put in a great deal of time and effort to build the Great Wall as defence from the Mongolians. In reality, there was another motive — to prevent Han Chinese from escaping.

Towards the end of the Ming Dynasty, there was much social oppression, leading to numerous peasant uprisings. Having failed in their attempts, some peasants fled beyond the Great Wall to escape persecution. Other impoverished commoners also fled to make a living. The major passes along the Great Wall were heavily guarded and difficult to pass. This became the imperial court's line of defence against escape. However, many still tried every means to settle down in the north.

Two sovereigns of the Qing Dynasty, Emperors Kangxi and Qianlong, did not rebuild the Great Wall but also did not advocate its removal. They had realised that, besides being a defence, it served another purpose — smuggling control. At that time, there were many traffickers who smuggled goods through the smaller pass entrances in order to save on taxes. So the smaller passes became a popular route for trafficking. The Defence Camp in Gubeikou was tasked with cracking down on smugglers as well as defending Gubeikou. Traffickers were heavily punished and those who resisted arrest were often beaten to death.

3

The Rustic Charms of Ruined Forts and Broken Walls

The Great Wall in Shaanxi

The Northern Shaanxi Great Wall was one of the nine zones. It starts from the Hequ County in Shanxi and ends in Yanchi County in Ningxia.

Hundreds of years of weathering have eroded the walls, but the ruined forts and broken walls have their own rustic charm, which still enthral visitors today.

Fugu

The wall near Longwangmiao Village in Fugu County may have ruined earth walls but many of its beacon towers still remain. One of the most alluring attractions is a well-preserved brick watchtower. There is a 30 m² enclosure outside the tower. One side of the watchtower's stone gate still remains, the only one of its kind on the Great Wall.

1

2

Shenmu

The Great Wall at Shenmu County is mostly in ruins. However, there is a brick watchtower on a mountain ridge in Shuitougou, known as Hualou, which is relatively well preserved. The structure of the tower is similar to the watchtower at Longwangmiao. The south entrance is between two embrasures and the other sides have four embrasures each.

Yulin

A major part of the Great Wall at Yulin County, from Mt. Shuangdun to Lijiaduan, has been covered with sand. Only about 10 beacons and wall ruins are left, none of which is more than two metres high. However, about 2.5 km away is a well-preserved tower named **Fort Jiananpu**. Although bricks and stone slabs from Fort Jiananpu were torn down by villagers for their own use, the remaining earth wall is magnificent, and retains its original outlook. Today, the east and south brick arch entrances still remain.

Zhenbeitai, the largest watchtower on the wall, sits on the peak of Mount Hongshan, five kilometres north of Yulin City. Zhenbeitai is a four-storied square tower, 30 m high, measuring 320 m around its base. The entire tower was built of green bricks and battlements were constructed on every level. Standing on top of Zhenbeitai, one can see the varied scenery both within and beyond the Great Wall. In the north is a sea of sand, and the ruined walls seem to be hiding in it at times. In the south is the Sanbei defence forest belt, which has become a forest.

The **Hongshixia** (Red Rock Gorge), located one kilometre west of Zhenbeitai, is worth a trip. There are four reasons why Hongshixia is a must-see: (1) It is where the Yulin River meets the Great Wall; (2) The steep cliffs and precipices take on an orangey hue under the setting sun. The reflection in the river is extraordinarily alluring; (3) The elaborate stone inscriptions on the cliff surface; (4) The 44 grottoes around the gorge. In addition, Xiongshangu Temple on the east side of the gorge still has a surviving grotto.

Hengshan

The Great Wall in Hengshan County crosses the Wuding River and meanders southeast along the mountains. On the mountain ridge near **Shidunqiang Village**, it winds its way through the shifting sand intermittently. The area around Shidunqiang Village has a serious problem with shifting sands. It may look very desolate but the weary Great Wall reminds us of its past glory. This is definitely a place worth the journey.

Jingbian

The Great Wall in Jingbian is mostly surrounded by sand. Most of its walls have collapsed while the remaining parts are mostly buried, with only some sections appearing above the sand. Moving along the Wuding River towards Hongliu River, in the middle of the Maowusu Desert, you will find the capital of the Western Xia Dynasty, Tongwan City. When the Xiongnu Helian Bobo established the Xia Dynasty, they forced the Han Chinese to send 100,000 men to build the city. It was also known as Baichengzi, meaning the earth was white.

Tongwancheng was replaced as the capital during the Yuan Dynasty. From then on, it became a desolate place. However, you can still see a 24 m-high watchtower at the ancient ruins of Tongwan City today. Facing the boundless desert at Tongwan City, one cannot help but wonder: why did Helian Bobo decide to build the capital in the desert?

2

Dingbian

Situated on loess, the Great Wall near Anbian Village in Dingbian is well preserved as the loess promotes adhesion. The earth walls are four to six metres high. Constructed on the ridges of mountains, the walls and beacon towers form a straight line, which looks spectacular.

Previous page:

1. The watchtower beside a river in Wuqi County.
2. A solitary beacon tower surrounded by yellow sand

This page:

1. The ancient ruins of the Tongwan City, Jingbian County
2. Zhenbeitai, located in Yulin County, is the largest watchtower along the Great Wall of China.
3. A badly collapsed brick wall

The Back-breaking Great Wall

The construction was a massive project. 50 million m^3 of brick and stones and 150 million m^3 of soil were used just to construct the Ming Great Wall alone. If the materials were used to build a 10 m wide and 3.5 cm thick road, it would go round the Earth more than twice. The total distance of the Great Wall exceeds 50,000 km.

The Qin Dynasty Great Wall was constructed when Emperor Qinshihuang ordered General Mengtian to lead 300,000 soldiers and prisoners and peasants to build the wall. It took more than 10 years to complete the massive project. In 555 AD, the Northern Qi Dynasty called up 1.8 million peasants to construct the 900 km stretch from Juyongguan Pass to Datong.

We can only imagine how gruellingly the Great Wall project was. Countless men died from such backbreaking work.

3

Across the Western Xia Kingdom

The Great Wall in Ningxia

The 1,000-km section of the Great Wall in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region starts at Yanchi in the east and ends at Jingyuan in Gansu in the west. On the way it passes 11 counties and cities. There are several sections in Ningxia that worth a visit.

Wuzhong

The **Xingwuying** Fortress is now in ruins, but it is from here that you can see two parallel Great Walls, which run all the way from Dingbian County in Shaanxi Province to Yanchi County in Ningxia, always five to six kilometres apart, before they meet at Xingwuying. It is a rare sight unavailable in other places.

Shizuishan

This part of the Great Wall from the 4th Middle School in Shizuishan City to Biangou on Helan Mountain is well preserved. Near **Hongguozi** is a 500-m section built of stone, while the rest is of tamped loess. Here you can see part of the wall has been dislocated by an ancient earthquake.

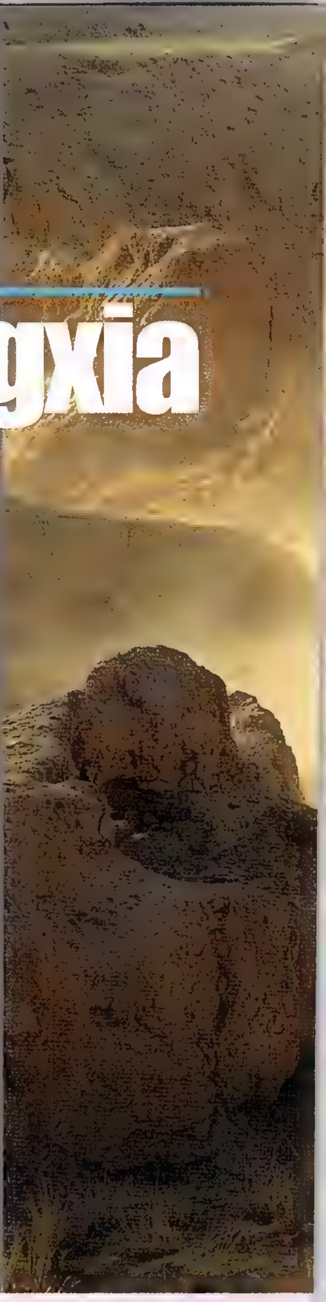
Yinchuan

The Sanguankou, or Three Passes, on the border of Yongning County in Yinchuan City and Alxa Left Banner in Inner Mongolia was called Chimu Pass in ancient times. It guards three passes through Helan Mountain, including one that connects with the Great Wall.

The mausoleum of the Western Xia King is near the Three Passes. The Western Xia Kingdom was established in the 11th century by a branch of the Qiang ethnic group. Eight emperors were buried in a mausoleum surrounded by tombs of some 70 ministers and imperial family members. The mausoleum is nearly four kilometres from east to west, and 10 km from north to south. The Kingdom of Western Xia fought tenaciously against Mongolian attacks, causing the death of Genghis Khan after he was seriously wounded. But finally it was swamped and the mausoleum was also destroyed.

Qingtongxia

In the 75 km section of the Great Wall in Qingtongxia City, the segment from Moshikou to Beichakou is preserved quite well. Running straight from the foot of the Helan Mountain down to south with few twists and turns, it looks very impressive and spectacular.



1. The "Double Great Walls" section at Honggouliang in Yanchi County, Ningxia
2. Sheep cross the Great Wall and roam the loess hills of the Helan Mountain.
3. A guard window in a watchtower of the Great Wall

2

Why Didn't the Tang Dynasty Build the Great Wall?

At it's zenith, the Tang Dynasty controlled the territory from the Amudarja River valley in the west to Lake Baikal in the north, which was much larger than the land during the Qin and Han dynasties.

From the first emperor of the Tang Dynasty Li Shimin, to Wu Zetian, the only empress in Chinese history, firm control was exercised over all the kingdoms north of the Tianshan Mountains and west of Congling Mountain. Transport between China and the west was good, and trade flourished. While Buddhism gained popularity in China, Zoroastrianism, Manicheanism, Nestorianism and the burgeoning Islam all breached China's hinterland. The two capital cities of the Tang Dynasty — Chang'an and Luoyang — attracted people from different cultures. While absorbing foreign cultures, the civilisation of the Central Plain also spread to the West, and influenced, to different degrees, the western countries.

In the splendour of the Tang Dynasty, the Great Wall lost its function of land demarcation and national defence.

3

Across the Hexi Corridor

The Great Wall in Gansu

The most beautiful and valuable section for historical research in Gansu Province is the ruined wall in the Hexi Corridor. As the Great Wall built in the Han and Ming (1368-1644) dynasties guarded the area and ensured the smooth traffic on the Silk Road, it was built very tall and strong.

Since ancient times, many wars were waged in the Hexi Corridor. It was the battleground where various armies fought heroically. The Wall is a historical witness to the wars over the control of the Hexi Corridor.

The most important military site on the Hexi Corridor is Xiakou. There is still a fortress at the pass with some 100 families living in it and a wooden drum tower nearby. The Silk Road would probably have run through the arch gate in the western wall of the fortress before.

The wall continues west from Xiakou to Xinheyi near Shandan County. As it is a dry place with few people, the tamped loess wall is in a better shape. The wall is about five metres high and two metres wide at the top. The north side of the top of the wall also has a low parapet, now less than half a metre high.

There are many ancient fortresses today along both sides of the Great Wall in Gansu Province. Among them the more notable ones are: the Rile Ancient Town east of Xiuhuamiao Village, Xinhepu near Chuaizhuang Village, the ancient towns of Liugong and Suoyang in Anxi County, and Hecang Ancient Town near the Yumenguan Pass.

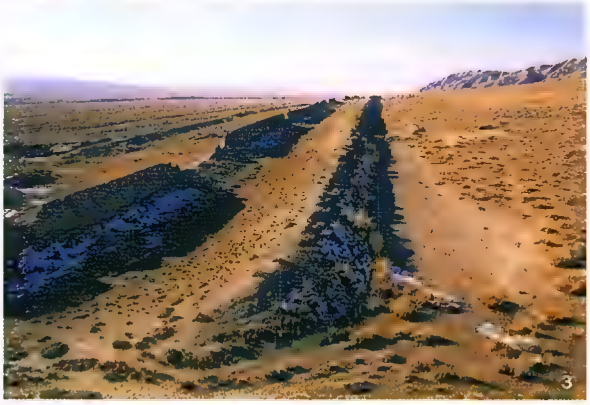
There are three very famous passes in Gansu Province: Jiayuguan Pass, Yumenguan Pass and Yangguan Pass. They have all been developed into tourist destinations. Jiayuguan Pass in particular receives hundreds of thousands of visitors every year.

1. The ruined wall of the ancient Hecang Town near Yumenguan Pass
2. Going through Jiayuguan Pass, the Ming Dynasty Great Wall was built completely of tamped loess. The snow-covered mountains in the distance are the Qilian Mountains.
3. The Rile section of the Double Great Walls built in the Han and Ming dynasties.

The Great Wall and the Ecological Environment

According to historical records, most of the areas along the Great Wall used to be well covered by forestry and grassland. This forms a sharp contrast to what we see today — desolated bare land under the dust-covered sky.

The tremendous ecological changes cannot take place without the wear and tear of the great nature. Yet the construction of the Great Wall and the human activities related to the Wall have also taken their toll on the environment around the Wall. Building up beacon towers and walls and digging moat were all earthwork that resulted in damage to the layer of soil and led to the exposure of underground grit and sand. The northwest wind blowing towards southeast eventually formed sand dunes that further grew into desert. Also, a large amount of timber was used to construct the Great Wall. The section of the Wall in Dunhuang, Gansu Province, was built of reed, the Chinese tamarisk or rose willow, and branches of diversiform-leaved poplar together with sand and stone. And all these had their impact on the environment.



3

Recommended Sections of the Great Wall

It is unlikely the average tourist will be able to visit all parts of the Great Wall. So I would like to recommend some sections of the Wall that are easy to access, yet with special features and adequate public facilities.

1. Dongjiakou & Banchangyu

Location: Funing County, Hebei Province, 35 km from Qinhuangdao City

Special Feature: There are fantastic peaks with grotesque rocks, cliffs and precipices, and special sights such as the Overhanging Wall, the Giant-stone Wall, the Stone Forest Wall, and the "Strip of Sky" Wall.

Transportation: Trains and buses are available from Beijing to Qinghuangdao City. From Qinhuangdao, take a bus or taxi to Shiling, then to Dongjiakou and Banchangyu, via Zhucaoying.

Accommodation: Tourists can stay in Qinhuangdao or farmers' hostels for 10-15 yuan* a day per person, where you can experience life in a mountain village.

Dongjiakou Great Wall

The watchtower and watergate at Qingshanguan Pass

2. Qingshanguan, Xifengkou and Panjiakou

Location: Qianxi County, Hebei Province

Special Feature: The fortresses at Qingshanguan Pass are perfectly preserved, and have a lot to offer visitors. It is rare to see so many fortresses on the Great Wall. Here there are offices, barracks, posthouses, stables, weapons storehouses and temples, as well as a Ming Dynasty mill, iron drums and stone missiles. The shimmering waves of the Panjiakou Reservoir extend into the distance. Like a huge dragon, the Great Wall at Xifengkou dives into the water and doesn't emerge until it reaches the bank of Panjiakou and continues up the mountain. This is the only place where it is possible to see the marvellous sight of the Great Wall under water.

Transportation: There are regular buses from Beijing, Tianjin, Chengde and Qinhuangdao to Qianxi every day. It takes only 2.5 hours to drive from Beijing.

Accommodation: Hotels and inexpensive farmers' hostels are available in these three tourist areas.

Ticket: Qingshanguan: 10 yuan/person (off season); 20 yuan/person (peak season)

Panjiakou and Xifengkou: A round trip boat fare to visit the Great Wall under water costs about 200 yuan.

3. Simatai Great Wall

Location: Miyun County, Beijing

Special Feature: This section is regarded as the best of the Great Wall. It would be a great pity for Great Wall lovers to miss Simatai.

Transportation: Tour Bus No. 12 goes to Simatai at 8 every morning from Xuanwumen in Beijing. Also, a bus sets off for Simatai at 8 every mourning from Jinghua Hotel near Yangqiao on the 3rd Ring Road in Beijing.

Accommodation: The Simatai Hotel has 150 beds, charging 100-280 yuan/person/day.

Ticket: 30 yuan

Simatai Great Wall

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*US $1 ~ 8 yuan

4. Wulonggoukou

Location: Laiyuan County, Hebei Province

Special Features: This section can match Badaling and Jinshanling Great Wall.

Transportation: Take the Jingshen expressway, get off at Gaobeidian exit, then turn west onto State Highway 112, passing Yixian County, Zijingguan, Dongxinzhuang before turning north onto State Highway 108.

Note: At present there are no tourist facilities and no entrance ticket is required. In addition to being careful about personal safety, you need to take enough water and food.

Wulonggoukou section of the Great Wall

The Great Wall at Laoniuwan

5. Laoniuwan

Special Feature: Laoniuwan is the only section of the Great Wall that stretches into the Yellow River. The scenery here includes not only the Yellow River and the Great Wall, but also an old fortress, tower, ferry, plank road, temple, and village, all dating back ages. The best time to visit is from May to October. The scenery in winter is also beautiful when there is ice and snow.

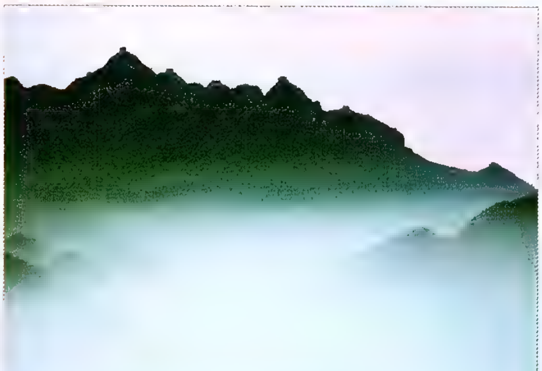
Transportation: Go to Pianguan from Taiyuan, Datong and Beijing

Accommodation: The Laoniuwan Hostel is now available for tourists. The cave hotel charges 200 yuan. Farmers' hostels charge 50 yuan per person.

A Lucky Hit

By Li Shaobai

One evening in the summer of 1997, I hiked up a hill in Xizha Village to stay overnight and get a nice picture of sunrise over the Great Wall at Jiankou. At midnight, the mist was hovering over the foot of the mountain, with the bright moon rising. Seeing this, I decided to get a picture. So I set the aperture at 16. From my experience, photographing something under a full moon by setting the aperture at 16 (the film sensitivity is 100) requires an exposure of about two hours. So I set the shutter at T for a long exposure. But I dozed off and didn't wake up till daybreak. My watch showed the exposure had been over four hours. I thought the film would be useless because of over-exposure. Upset at my mistake, I rolled the film and placed all my hope on sunrise at Jiankou. But when I developed the film, I was surprised to see it was the best picture. So I scored a hit with a stroke of luck. Photography is more amazing than painting, because of its unpredictability!



The Great Wall at Jiankou — an unexpected lucky hit

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JAN/FEB

Yuci old Town

Jan 27~Feb 26

Shanxi Shehuo Performance Festival

Venue: Yuci Old Town of Jinzhong, Shanxi Province

What's on: Shehuo is an outdoor folk performance played by local farmers during Spring Festival and the traditional Lantern Festival. The show usually includes stilt-walking, horse-riding, lion and dragon dances, lantern display and the land-boat yangko (a stage prop).

Feb 23

Butter Lamp Festival

Venue: Lhasa City, Tibet Autonomous Region

What's On: Tsampa sculptures and colourful buttered ornaments, including flowers, birds, animals and figurines made by monks will be on display at Bargor Street in downtown Lhasa. At night, people will celebrate with dances and songs.

Bargor Street

Yuyuan Garden

Feb 9~26

Yuyuan Garden Lantern Festival

Venue: Yuyuan Garden, Shanghai

What's On: Several dozens of large scale lantern groups with special themes will make Yuyuan a sea of lanterns during lunar new year. Various activities such as operas and rooster-fighting will also be held. The new water screen film system at the Lotus Pool is a must-see for all visitors.

Feb 9~24

Beijing Changdian Folk Art and Cultural Temple Fair

Venue: South Xinhua Street of Liulichang, Beijing Municipality

What's On: During lunar new year, there are quite a lot of temple fairs held in Beijing but Changdian Temple Fair is surely the most special one. With its long history and cultural richness, it is praise as one of the four most important temple fairs in China. Locals and tourists can enjoy antiques, calligraphies and paintings exhibited at the fair, and there are also customs show, theatrical performance and handicrafts demonstrations held at the place.

Feb 6~8

Spring-welcoming Flower Show

Venue: Guangzhou City, Guangdong Province

What's On: The Flower Show is a traditional activity well received by people in Guangzhou when celebrating the Spring Festival. During the show, farmers will carry their flowers to the city proper for sale.

Early Feb

Zigong International Dragon Lantern Festival

Venue: Zigong City, Sichuan Province

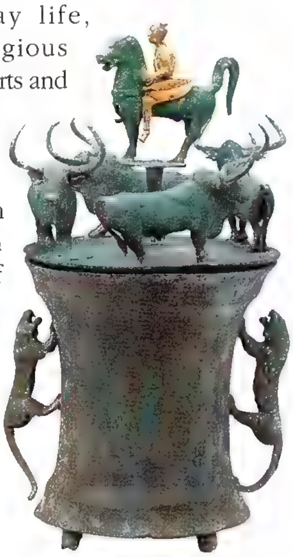
What's On: Zigong is famous for the excavation of dinosaurs' fossils. During this one-month festival, unique porcelain and glass lanterns in the shape of dinosaurs will be the main emphasis, whereas lanterns made of bamboo, silk and paper will also be displayed. These exquisite and superb handicrafts will fill the city with joyous colours.

Now till Feb 21

Hunting and Rituals : Treasures from the Ancient Dian Kingdom

Venue: Hong Kong Museum of History, Hong Kong

What's on: Featuring an array of bronze relics selected from the collection of the Yunnan Provincial Museum, the exhibition gives visitors a glimpse of the material culture, everyday life, military and religious activities, as well as arts and crafts of the Dian Kingdom. The ancient Dian Kingdom, which established in Dianchi area of Yunnan, reached its peak development from the Warring States period (475-221 BC) to the Western Han dynasty (206 BC-AD 25).



Bronze cowrie container from Dian Kingdom

HONG KONG

Hong Kong Disneyland to Open Soon

The Hong Kong government announced that the Hong Kong Disneyland will open on Sept. 12, 2005. The opening would be a driving force for tourism growth for Hong Kong, and it is predicted that, in the first 40 years after opening, Hong Kong Disneyland will bring about HK$148 billion (US $19 billion) of benefits to Hong Kong as a whole.

The admission price of the Hong Kong Disneyland will be set at HK $295 (US $38) per adult during weekdays and HK $350 (US $45) on weekends and peak days; children's tickets (aged between 3 and 11 years) will be priced at HK $210 (US $27) during weekdays and HK $250 (US $32) on weekends and peak holidays. This is the cheapest admission price of all Disneylands in the world.

CHINA

Aviation Industry Sets Safety Flight Record

Chinese flights has logged more than five million continuous hours of safety from May 2002 till Nov 2004. This is the longest record in the nation's history ever since.

Between 1994 and 2003, China's air safety conditions improved remarkably, with an average accident occurrence at 0.62 per every one million hours of flights. The ratio, just under the world average of 0.64, has gone down to 0.44 for the last three years.

GUANGZHOU

Non-stop Flight to Munich

Deutsche Lufthansa, one of Europe's largest airlines, has established a representative office in Guangzhou, its third office in Mainland China.

Lufthansa has held high prospects for the Pearl River Delta region and is expected to launch the first non-stop direct flight between Munich and Guangzhou by the first quarter of 2005.

In the beginning of 2004, Lufthansa launched its first passenger flight linking the two cities. It is now operating a total of 41 weekly flights linking Chinese and European cities, the largest number among all European air carriers.

BEIJING

Cathay to Fly Daily to Beijing

Hong Kong flagship carrier Cathay Pacific Airways has launched a daily flight to Beijing since December 2004, a year after the airline resumed services to the capital.

Cathay, which is operating three weekly flights, has been granted rights to operate a second daily service to Beijing from the start of the summer season in 2005. Cathay has also been allocated rights upon designation to operate three weekly passenger services to Xiamen and plans to launch services early this year. But it has to wait until October 2006 to fly passengers on the lucrative Shanghai route.

Beijing city

CHINA

China Adds 3 Nations to Tourist Destinations

China has added Brazil, Argentina and Chile to its list of approved destinations for group tours. Travel agencies will be able to organise tours to those countries. Chinese travellers can now explore Brazil's rainforest, Chile's volcanoes and Easter island, and Argentina's Moreno Glacier.

China's tourist destinations now cover more than 60 countries. The World Tourism Organisation has predicted that China will become the world's fourth biggest source of tourists by 2020.

Macao at dusk

MACAO

Green Light to Expand Mainland Flights

The Chinese government recently approved another airline to fly to Mainland China from Macao. This second airline will be allowed to fly from Macao to most Chinese cities except Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou. Service to those cities would be opened in the summer of 2006.

The Australian budget carrier Virgin Blue is exploring the possibility of operating these flights with a low-cost service. Right now, Air Macao is the only Macao-based airline.

Yantai city

SHANDONG

Construction of China's Longest Railway Ferry Line on Track

The Yantai-Dalian Railway Ferry Project, which is the longest railway ferry line in China, had started construction recently. The project costed about two billion yuan (US $280 million) in total, and is expected to start operation in June 2006.

The Yantai-Dalian line starts from Yangtouwa in Dalian City (Liaoning Province) and ends in Situdi in Yantai City (Shandong Province). It connects the southern tip of the Liaodong Peninsula and the northern end of the Jiaodong Peninsula across the Bohai Bay, and the direct route is 147 km. On completion, it will be 400 to 1,000 km shorter than the existing railway route.

The train of Yantai-Dalian line, after going through the Yangtouwa channel, will be ferried across the Bohai Straits by special locomotives. The sea voyage will take four hours in total.

SHANGHAI

Pudong Airport Upgrades Navigation System

The Pudong International Airport plans to upgrade its navigation system to allow flights to land and take off in bad weather such as dense fog.

The airport is currently installing and testing this new navigation facilities. If the system is approved, it will enable planes to land even if the visibility is below 350 m, a visibility level that calls for a "blind landing" depending solely on instruments.

The Pudong airport can now allow landings when visibility is between 350 and 550 m. Poor visibility affects the airport up to 40 days each year.

BEIJING

Styled Walkway to Connect Royal Gardens

A styled pedestrian walkway will be built soon to connect two Beijing royal gardens: the Summer Palace and the Yuan Ming.

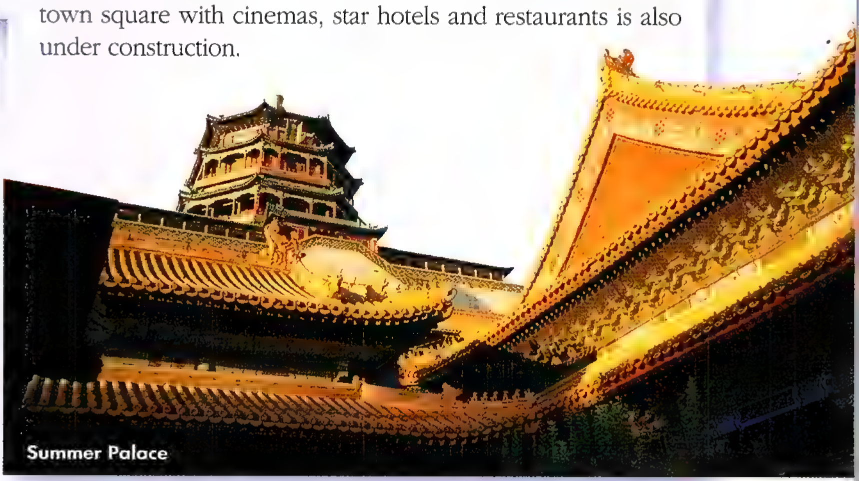
The two-kilometre street will be scattered with cafes, teahouses, art galleries, and souvenir boutiques, giving it a pleasant and modern cultural flavour. In addition, a 16,000-m^2 town square with cinemas, star hotels and restaurants is also under construction.

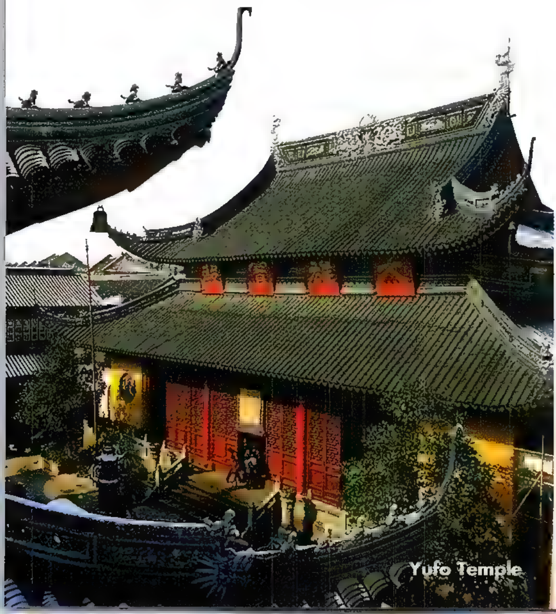
SICHUAN

Karst Geological Park Opened to Public

The Xingwen Karst Geological Park, approved as national geological park, has formally opened to tourists as a state-level scenic spot.

Located in Xingwen County of Sichuan Province, the park lies in the transitional zone between the Sichuan Basin and Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau. It is where the giant doline, a closed depression draining underground water in karst areas, was first studied and named in China. It is therefore one of the most important places for karst landform research in the country.


Summer Palace


Yufo Temple

SHANGHAI

Famous Buddhist Monastery Reopened

The most popular Buddhist temple in Shanghai, Yufo (Jade Buddha) Temple, was back in use after the largest expansion ever.

The expansion cost 130 million yuan (US $16 million) and has enlarged the 120-year-old temple by about 4,000 m^2. The temple complex included multifunctional lecture halls, an exhibition hall, classrooms, a dining hall, underground parking, and the city's only Buddhism school. After expansion, the school can recruit more students, from the current 30 to 60, and eventually up to 200.

Famous for the two jade Buddhas brought back from Myanmar during the Qing Dynasty, the Yufo Temple accounts for more than 90% visitors to Shanghai every year.

The Song of Forbidden Love Bashi

Photos by Wu Jialin, Ou Yansheng & Li Kun   Article by Liu Yi

No one knows how many Jinuo lovers were suffered from forbidden love because of a ban on intermarriage within the same clan. These people could only express their sorrow by singing the sentimental Bashi song in the hope of union after death. Now the clan barrier has lifted, and the mysterious Bashi song is hearing its swan song on Jinuo Mountain.

My first visit to Jinuo Mountain in Xishuangbanna, Yunnan Province, was in 1985. In the 1960s, the Xiaola Highway forced the migration of a dozen Jinuo villages. But if you head into the mountains, you will feel as if you have gone back in time. Bamboo pots bubble over the fire in every household, along with baked food wrapped in banana leaves. The life of the Jinuo ethnic minority has barely changed in villages like this one.

From one of the houses, I thoughtlessly took out a shell key ring. The old Jinuo guide looked uneasily at the key ring from time to time, but shifted his eyesight away swiftly.

In his sixties, my guide Shache is the head of the Jinuo Mountain Cultural Centre and one of the best Mandarin speakers of people around his age. He told me immediately that I should put away the key ring to avoid trouble.

Several days later, it was time for the traditional Temuk Festival (Iron-Hammering festival) for ploughing preparation.

From far off, I heard the beating of wooden drums. People dance to the big drum dance only on this occasion, when the god accepts the offerings and brings New Year happiness.

Bashi: A Love Song

In the dark of night, bonfires were still burning after youngsters and children had dispersed. Just the old folks and a couple of middle-aged villagers remained. From the crowd came the singing of old voices, gentle and melancholy. A group of elderly men and women swayed their bodies to the rhythm. The night was getting deeper and the singing became heart-rending. Meanwhile, the singing from the inner circle turned into a murmur mixed with weeping that revealed boundless grief and resentment beyond description.

Tears ran down the wrinkled faces while the middle-aged ones looked on perplexed. The singing that shook my heart went on and on but no one explained the purpose of it.

Shache also kept silent, fixing his eyes on the flying sparks. I sought an explanation from him but he ignored me, although I knew he had heard me.

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The next day Shache told me that the old folks had chanted the Bashi, an ancient song about the forbidden love between members within the same clan. Jinuo people have sung the song for generations. "Bashi" is the term that refers to courtship within the same clan. According to legend, when a Bashi girl died, she turned into a shell that symbolises the "Goddess of the Shell". In the past when Jinuo people saw the Goddess of the Shell, they held a memorial ceremony and offered sacrifices. This is the reason Shache asked me to put away the shell key ring I had taken from that ancient Jinuo house.

No Intermarriage within the Same Clan

Shache accompanied me to the Jinuo villages of three generations: Old Village, Children's Village and Grandchildren's Village. Another legend says that their ancestors came down from Jiezhuo Mountain and built the first Jinuo village. They call it the Old Village, because the builders belonged to the highest rank in the clan generational hierarchy. The Children's Villages are branches of the ancestors' villages and the Grandchildren's Villages are the subdivisions. Jinuo villages are mostly composed of the Zhuoba and Zhuose clans, including families of different surnames. It is generally believed that a traditional village must have two different clans jointly administered by senior villagers from each clan. It is for safety as well as the need for reproduction.

That winter I visited Baya Village, an Old Village composed of a dozen families from Zhuoba and Zhuose clans. Shache's home is in the village and he belongs to the Zhuoba clan. From time immemorial the Jinuo have strictly adhered to a prohibition that forbids marriage within the same clan. Villagers regard related cohabiting couples as nothing better than animals.

However, the problem is that the Jinuo have few opportunities to contact people outside their clans. More than 50 years ago, the primeval forests on Jinuo Mountain were boundless and it took more than half a day's walk from one village to another. Each village was like an enlarged family.

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1. **The wooden drums are Jinuo's sacred sacrificial instruments. (Photo by Wu Jialin)**
2. **Baya, in the depths of Jinuo Mountain, is a big village with the most severe execution of the traditional rules and regulations. (Photo by Li Kun)**
3. **The big drum dance at Temuk Festival (Photo by Ou Yansheng)**

Life-and-Death Love in Nigaozhuo

Apuche, a member of the Kepuluo clan, is the singing king in Baya Village. In his childhood, outsiders came to purchase tea only during the dry season. Young villagers did not meet anyone the same age. Their entertainment was to meet in the bamboo stilt house called the "Nigaozhuo".

The Nigaozhuo served as a club for the village. Most of the young men lived there. Every evening, young girls piled up wood in the fire-pit for the entertainers to boil glue to dye their teeth. Young men weaved bamboo baskets while chatting. If a boy had fallen in love with a girl, he would make eyes at her and seize the opportune moment to exchange a "betel-nut bag" as a token of love. In the still of night, when a successful young man went home with black teeth, he would drop a hint to his lover and then they left the club one after the other. When the girl, a torch in hand, went home, the boy would be close behind.

However, many sorrowful stories emerged from the club because some youngsters came from the same clan. Under such circumstances, they did not have much choice. The fire-pit in Nigaozhuo has produced generation after generation of life-and-death "Bashi"—lovers of near relation.

1

Struggling Painfully between Life and Love

In many villages, the older generation never talk about the sad stories though their eyes still shine when they remember the Nigaozhuo. They spare no effort to oppose consanguineous marriage, but I have discovered that in Zaguo, a Children's Village, half of those who grew up in the 1950s have a history of Bashi love.

2

According to an ancient Jinuo saying, after a disastrous flood, only Ma Hei and his sister Ma Niu, the first ancestors of the Jinuo people, remained in the world. They got married and gave birth to seven children. Later, bees ate the eldest; the others — three boys and three girls — became three couples and thus the Jinuo people multiplied. The Jinuo believe that the dwellings of their ancestors are the big bamboo houses where the Jinuo clans live. In these houses, brothers and sisters of the same clan can get married as long as they love each other. Nevertheless, in real life the prohibition remains.

In Baya Village, I heard a story of the last Bashi couple in the 1940s. A courting couple of the same clan lived together regardless of the consequences. The villagers became furious. The couple had to hide in a mountain, and did not return until they thought it was safe. But the villagers ate up all their livestock, burned their house and chased them away with a sound beating. It was the most severe punishment in those years. They lost the protection of the collective and had to roam in the forest like beasts. Not until the 1950s were they found again.

The Jinuo have complicated feelings toward the Bashi lovers. Their Mountain Goddess was part of a Bashi, and legend says that after the couple escaped to the mountain, the girl died from sorrow. Then she became the Mountain Goddess and sent birds and beasts as food for her surviving lover.

Jinuo people must bury the dead in the cemetery of their own clan and never entomb husband and wife in the same grave. In this way, the dead can marry their Bashi lover in the village of their ancestors. They believe their ancestors have left this feasible approach for Bashi lovers. In reality, courting couples are not allowed to commit suicide for love. They are checked by the concept: "those who die unnaturally shall not go back to the ancestors' dwelling place." Hoping to get back together and marry their sweethearts after death, they wait for the time to come. So they live a forlorn life, watching helplessly while their lover marries someone else.

Temuk Festival

Jinuo society permits Bashi to meet at particular times. The most common occasion is the yearly Temuk Festival when families move to a new house. Then Bashi courting couples can sing and dance together freely. Even in Baya Village where the ban is most strictly enforced, husbands or wives can contact their old lovers, including the Bashi.

They can sing in a bold and confident manner. The singers are old folks, singing and by the fire-pits. In tears, they sing in a low voice. The temporary but happy occasion is very short after much suffering.

The first part of the ancient Bashi songs is almost the same, differing only in the singer's performance. The greatest difference is the ending of the song. Some Bashi lovers return to the ancestors' dwelling site after death and supposingly live a happy married afterlife; others finally get married with the consent of their uncle on the maternal side after overcoming all sorts of obstructions. Still others die and the other partner marries someone else.

Recording the Bashi

Apuche and Apuzhi, both villagers of Baya, were the authorised singers for half a century. When Apuzhi was nearly 80, the two singers finally agreed to make a Bashi recording. They had been worried that their singing would call back the dead, or deities, to the village. To ease their concerns, we asked them to sing in the government office five kilometres away. The township government was the political and cultural centre as well a site outside the influence of the Jinuo, where ghosts or deities would hold no fears.

1. Jinuo villages on Jinuo Mountain (Photo by Ou Yansheng)
2. Spinning is a fundamental skill for Jinuo women. They work at it whether at home or having a walk. (Photo by Liu Jianhua)
3. Primeval hunting tools (Photo by Xu Ye)
4. When old folks sing Bashi, they feel as if they have gone back to their youth. (Photo by Wu Jialin)

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The two old men, one as the Bashi boy, the other the girl, sang together. The ancient melancholy melody and the singers' choking tone broke the hearts of the listeners. It took four days to make the record. Blind to everything around, the old folks lost themselves in singing. Their voices floated as if from the thick of a forest, and mixed with the sound of wind and rain. One day soon after the recording a big fire engulfed Apuche's house due to a trifling fault. His son rushed back and yelled at him angrily.

I understood that the fire had nothing to do with the singing of Bashi, but I could find no way to dispel the old man's qualms. I have been cherishing an indescribable regret for having urged the old men to make the recording.

Since then Apuche has changed. He felt vaguely that punishment had been inflicted on him from a mysterious power. He sang no more and even got nervous hearing it. Reproaching himself for violating the tradition, he would have committed suicide if not for his grandson who had caught him in the act.

1

Bashi is indispensable at any festival. However, they usually avoid the most ancient type that Apuche and Apuzhi usually sing, concerning religion or sacrifices for ghosts and deities. Legend has it that in 1941, Jinuo Mountain made a stand against the local government for three years. In order not to offend the spirits during the struggle, the seniors held a ceremony to close the "Gates of the Ghost", using sorcerers and ceremonial conductors. Then, they ceased all memorial ceremonies or songs related to ghosts and gods. After the struggle, they were unable to hold a ceremony to reopen the two "gates" due to financial problems. As the delay was very long, the part of Bashi related to ghosts and spirits gradually became taboo. This is why the villagers felt uneasy after Apuche's house was burnt down.

Not all the Bashi songs are as sorrowful as those sung in Baya Village. There are different songs that have to do with the generation and locality of the village, as well as attitudes toward Bashi. Baka Village near the Dai ethnic minority border, is of the children's generation. In the village, lives a female singer named Sha Du, who specialises in Bashi. Quite different from other villages, her Bashi is a subject fellow villagers talk about with keen pleasure. Bashi lovers in her song finally become husband and wife.

I revisited Baya Village in 2000 and came across the villagers I had visited previously. All of them were senile and doddering. Apuche had built a wooden house in the same place. He no long remembered me. When talking about the time after the fire, he had difficulty expressing himself due to his broken Mandarin. "Our folks say when tree branches grow thick they are to cut away," he stammered. "When we have a better life, ghosts are brought in." I sensed what he meant: after he sang the Bashi concerning ghosts and gods, he incurred blame for not holding a ceremony to reopen the "Gates of Ghost", and offended the spirits.

Two weeks later Shache told me Apuche had passed away. I hurried to Baya Village and found a solitary thatched shed his family had made for his grave. They buried him according to local traditions. Now that the kind old man had died, a generation of Jinuo singers has gone forever. Villagers of his type lived, loved, and sang all their lives. Among people without written language, they were the ancient books and history. What they have lost can never be recovered.

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The Last Generation of Bashi Singers

Shache and Bai Jialin have been my interpreters as well as my best teachers and friends during my investigation on Jinuo Mountain. They are the last generation of Bashi

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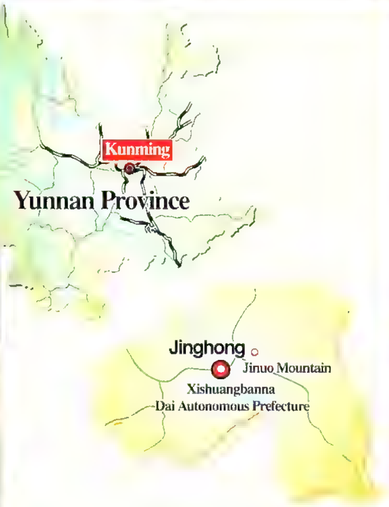

singers. The song moves them, because they have experienced Bashi love.

On the following day in the 2000 Spring Festival, we went with some seniors to select trees to make drums. On the way back, all the old men burst out laughing. It turned out that they saw the Bashi girl, who Bai Jialin was in love with before, had started to work in the land beneath the slope. With his bad eyesight, Old Man Bai abruptly gave a broad grin. After a round of teasing and joking, they urged Bai to sing a love song.

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"Oh, Bashi girl my darling, today is a nice day for the meeting of the sun and the moon. The two of us with love engraved in the memory are like the tissues of a sweeper attracting monkeys; a bamboo whistle calling muntjac." Bai sang passionately while Shache interpreted for me. All the others revelled in the singing. Before his voice died away, the Bashi girl, an old woman in her seventies at the foot of the slope, climbed up and stood beside Bai with no qualms. Nearly half a century has slipped by her and her beauty has long disappeared. Her black hair has turned grey and her wise eyes are senile. Nevertheless, the bygone Bashi girl is still as pretty as she was in Bai's fervent heart.

At that very moment, I turned my eyes to find tears all over Shache's face. When Bai Jialin said goodbye to his old lover, Shache walked away by himself.

That afternoon I went to see him with Old Bai. We found him singing Bashi at the balcony. His singing brought out a sense of inexpressible bewilderment. Cloying sentiments poured out like a stream from his heart. Tears ran down his lips but he would not wipe them off. He gazed quietly into the distance as if his soul had gone with his singing. Bai whispered to me that Shache's Bashi girl died the previous year but nobody told him the bad news. By the time he learnt of it, she had been buried. The girl's death was a great blow.

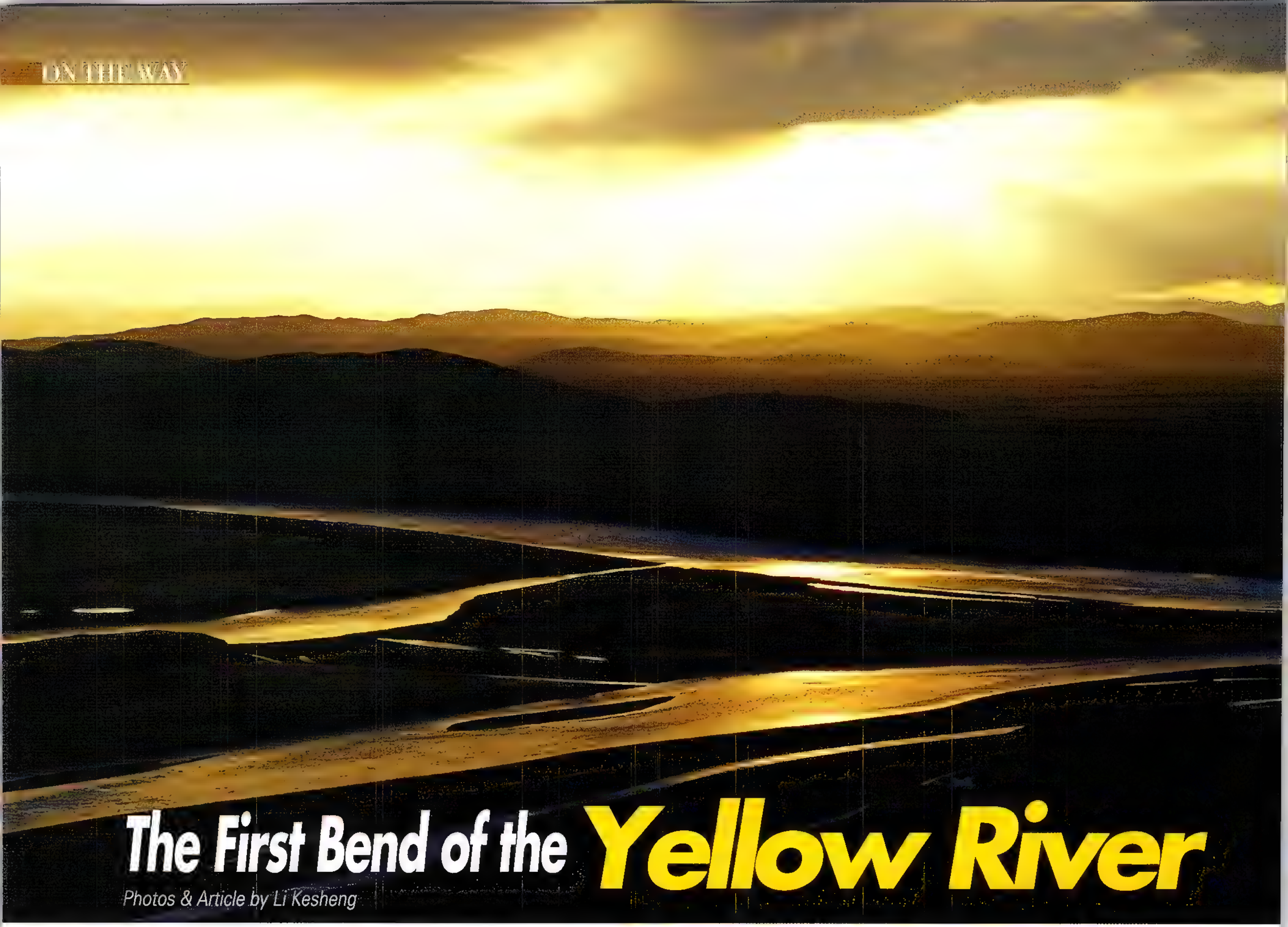
Shache, Bai Jialin and their sweethearts are the last generation of Bashi lovers and Bashi singers on Jinuo Mountain. Young people today do not know or care for what clan they belong to, especially when they need a registered Han surname to go to school. Moreover, they have no idea whether their lovers are Bashi or not. To them, Bashi is just an old legend.

When the Jinuo meet the outside world, Bashi relationships gradually fade away. The ancient traditional song arouses no interest from the younger generation and Bashi singers are not important. The effect of Bashi as an important classic has become extinct.

For all that, Bashi have existed in this place. The long song of Bashi has recorded a passage in the history of the Jinuo.

Translated by Anju K.

1. **Husband and wife can respect each other and live together to a ripe old age, but each of them might have a Bashi love affair hidden at the bottom of the heart. (Photo by Li Kun)**
2. **Bashi girls can only meet their lovers without restraint at Temuk Festival or other celebrations. (Photo by Ou Yansheng)**
3. **Do the new generation in Jinuo Mountain know or care about Bashi? (Photo by Liu Jianhua)**
4. **Shache is the last generation to experience Bashi love. Each time he sings Bashi, the tears come. (Photo by Li Kun)**



The First Bend of the Yellow River

Photos & Article by Li Kesheng

The Yellow River, originating from Yueguzongle, north of Bayan Har Mountain, flows southeast from Zhaling Lake and Eling Lake, passing the southern foot of A'nyemaqen Mountain. Blocked by Minshan Mountain, it makes a 180° turn to the northwest of Tangke, in Ruoergai County of Sichuan Province, and then flows to Qinghai, forming a U-shaped circle around A'nyemaqen Mountain. This is known as the first bend of the Yellow River.

The first bend of the Yellow River covers large areas of Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan provinces, and the famous hequ horses are originated here.

The First City in the First Bend

Maqu is the Tibetan name for the Yellow River. Maqu County, at an elevation of 3,300 to 4,806 m at the eastern edge of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and the southern end of Gansu Province, is the only county named after the river. A'nyemaqen Mountain is in the county and Xiqing Mountain stretches to the north. The Yellow River flows slowly in the Hequ area because of the flat terrain forming many meandering courses, channels and marshlands. Since the Baihe (White) River and Heihe (Black) River converge here, the Yellow River is bigger in the north of Maqu County. Many fishponds form here, and it is the home of geese and black-necked cranes in summer and autumn.

Maqu County town is quite small, but modern. Twenty years ago the roads were lined with brick buildings, and herdsmen tied their horses here while they strolled along the street. Today the development of western China offers new opportunities for the small plateau town. To improve the environment and promote tourism, the streets are being widened, a common scene in remote towns of Gansu and Qinghai provinces.

Hequ Horse Faces Extinction

Maqu is the home of hequ horses. There is a hequ horse farm about 25 km from town. The hequ horse is a fine plateau horse, big, tall and obedient. At the same time it is

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resistant to cold and eats coarse fodder.

It was so quiet in the farm office and we only saw old dogs and pigs in the laneways. What had happened to the bustling horse farm? Neither could we see the horses and animal trainers in the stable, nor could we even find a person to ask. Fortunately, some workers were setting up wires in the distance, so we went over to ask them. It turned out the land had been divided up for the herdsmen, who raised mainly sheep and cattle.

Following the development of modern society, the hequ horse went out of fashion, making them worth less than a sheep. Vehicles had been used instead of horses for the previous several dozen years, and tractors had taken their job. Furthermore, Western, Japanese, and also Arabic horses are used in horse racing. Will the hequ horse become extinct one day? We can now only imagine the magnificent scene of 10, 000 horses galloping in the old movies. We had brought two boxes of wine as gifts for the herdsmen, hoping that they could set up a scene of a hundred horses galloping for us. Needless to say, we were disappointed that this proved impossible.

Beware of the Mastiff

Since we could not take pictures of the galloping horses, we had half a day to visit the herdsmen.

One has to be vigilant of the plateau mastiff when visiting the tents of the herdsmen. It is as big as an ox and ferocious. So before entering the tent we first checked whether they had a dog, and made sure it was tied up.

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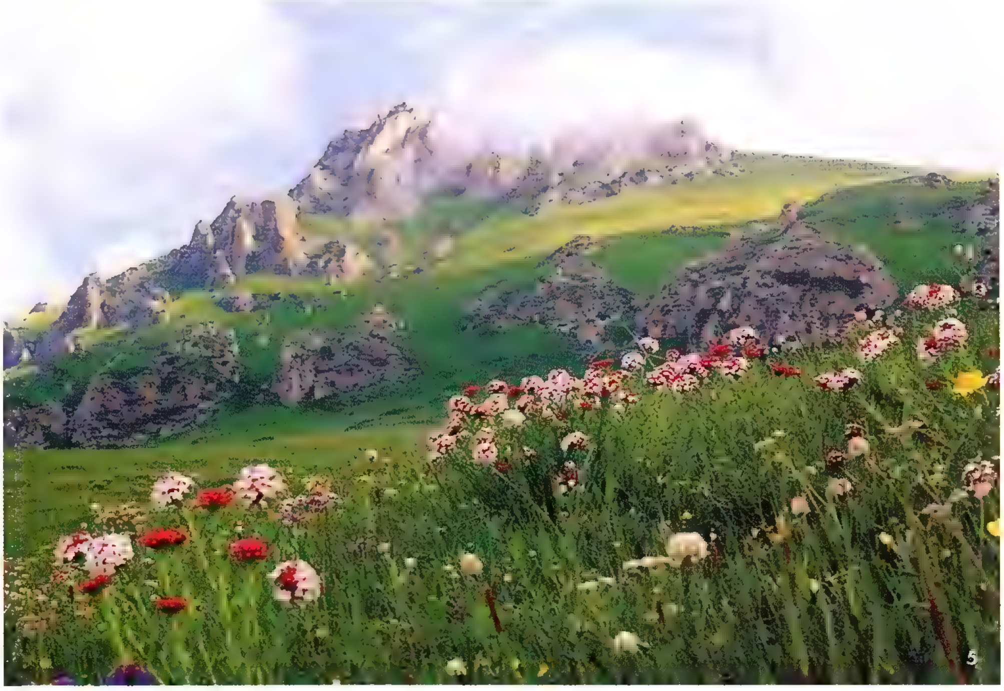
Generally the tent is about 100 m². Some of them live alone, but most live in groups with several families together. Now the Tibetan herdsmen have their own settlements and they only move in quest of pasture in summer and autumn. The difference is that now they have their own allocated pasture. Even so, sometimes disputes are unavoidable.

It is true that the Tibetan people are the kindest and most hospitable people. No matter what ethnic group or country you are from, if you say "Qiaodaimo" (meaning "how are you" in Tibetan) you are sure to be welcomed with buttered zanba and milk tea. We visited a family from Waleka Village of Nima Township. Sitting on the floor covered with sheep and ox skins, we were entertained with buttered zanba, cheese and milk tea. The tea, grown in northwest Sichuan, tasted like soya bean milk or light coca milk, fragrant and tasty.

Since they were very busy during the summer, we stayed for a short time and then left. Stepping out of the tent we saw some herdsmen riding after their yaks. As soon as the fence was opened, the yaks rushed towards the riverbank raising a cloud of dust. It was a nice chance for some pictures. We took snapshots while running behind them. But we were no match and were soon left far behind. With the thin air, we had to sit down panting while watching them run away.

1. **Sunset on the first bend of the Yellow River**
2. **Tibetan herdswomen**
3. **The Hequ horse is a fine plateau horse.**
4. **The herdsmen make milk tea for guests.**
5. **Various flowers in the plateau**



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We saw another herd running towards the riverbank, looking even more imposing. Since we had time, we selected a better position this time. Clouds of dust blew up, like a huge black dragon.

About 20 km south of Maixi you will come to the Heihe pastures, and enter the bend area of the Yellow River.

We were torn between joy and sorrow about the journey from the Heihe grazing land to Xiaman, a distance of 36 km, because each side of the road presented a striking contrast. The east side is marshland full of yellow and pink flowers, with water birds and black-necked cranes flying about. The west side was higher and desertification was very serious. We often saw signs on the roadside warning of over-grazing. In some sections drifting sand covered the road, a really disquieting scene. It is difficult to repair the damage once grassland becomes desert. After passing Xiaman the vista widened. We were lucky that the weather was nice, with thin clouds shading the harsh light. We soon approached the first bend of the Yellow River.

Overlooking the First Bend of the Yellow River

Suogezang Temple, at Tangke Township in Ruoergai County, has its own distinctive characteristics. The temple was built by Luorang Danzeng Jiangcuo in the middle of the 17th century, halfway up Wohu Mountain. The temple contains eight halls and over 100 rooms for 200 registered monks and three living Buddhas. The Great Scripture Hall was built at the top surrounded by other halls and Buddhas' rooms, like a myriad of stars surrounding the moon. Monk Dan Zhi told us the temple houses more than 10,000 gold, silver, bronze, wooden and clay statues, with the biggest over 10 m high and smallest several millimetres.

Wohu Mountain, a sacred mountain of Tangke, is the best place to see the first bend of the Yellow River. There is a road to the top of the mountain, and it is no problem for a powerful vehicle and a skilled driver.

Seen from the top of the mountain, the Yellow River is like a floating jade ribbon wriggling towards the grassland from Heaven. The Yellow River and its tributary, the Baihe (White) River, join here, called "happy gathering of mother and son" by local people.

Waqie's White Pagodas, Sutra Streamers and Fish

Waqie is the seat of the township government, 41 km from Suogezang Temple, with the Baihe River flowing past.

Behind the trees standing along the Waqie highway is a white pagoda forest and a large area of sutra streamers, famous in Hequ area, the only one of this scale in northwest Sichuan. Sometimes people drive past if they do not know what is to be seen here. Several years ago it was put on the list of scenic spots of Hongyuan County. Waqie Pagoda Forest was built during the 1980s. When the tenth Panchen Lama gave sermons and inspections in the southern

Gansu and western Sichuan, Tibetan disciples of these areas built many white pagodas (also known as Weisang Altars) along the way to welcome him. Waqie Pagoda Forest is also where Panchen Lama used to give sermons in Waqie. As a result, it is considered a sacred place by the disciples. Some white pagodas were built around the original gradually. From then on, more white pagodas were built over 20 years, forming the "forest" we see today.

Sutra streamers, sacrifices for the dead, are found on one side of the Pagoda Forest, known as "Mani flags" by the local people. The sutra streamer looks like an umbrella with a wooden stick in the middle and layers of colourful cloth tied on the sides with wire. Being buffeted by wind and the sun, the outside layer looks yellowish grey, something offensive to the eye. But looking from beneath, the big streamer is totally different. So beautiful with the colourful knots tied up by in strips of cloth, set off by the blue sky and white clouds. They look like a geometric abstract painting, never seen in other places.

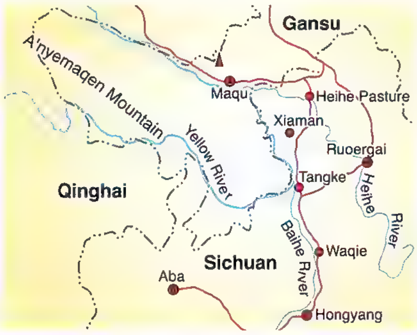
At the fork in the road is a nameless restaurant that serves Sichuan-style dishes and also offers accommodation. The place is operated by Sister Liu and Boss Zeng, from Chengdu. The fish cooked in fermented soybean is known far and wide, and everyone who has been to Waqie speaks highly of it. You can choose the live fish yourself, a kind of carp from the Yellow River. The fish is then killed and cooked right away with Sichuan spices, tasting really fresh, tender and delicious. At the same time it is quite cheap, 10 yuan per 500 g. My friends, some of whom are gourmets, have travelled with me to Waqie in recent years, and are full of praise for the dish. Now the fish dish made by Sister Liu enjoys equal renown with the sutra streamers and pagoda forest, known as the "three specialties" of the place.

People usually say that the Yellow River has 99 bends. But I was thinking on the way back that there are far more than 99 bends in the 5,000 km river. But the most beautiful bends of all are on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau.

1. **The galloping cattle**
2. **Suogezang Temple is famous in the area of Hequ.**
3. **Baihe (White) River**

Travel Tips

- **Routes:** Going to the first bend of the Yellow River you may set off from Lanzhou, the capital of Gansu Province, and pass Linxia City, Labrang Monastery of Xiahe County, Hezuo City, capital of Gannan Prefecture, Bola, and Amuquping to arrive at the Gahai crossroads of Luqu County. Then go via Maqu to Dashui grassland. Maixi- Heihe -Xiaman-Tangke (the big bend of the Yellow River)-Waqie.
- **Visiting seasons:** June to September
- **Accommodation:** Shouqu Hotel in Maqu is a three-star hotel. It is difficult to find a place to stay when local festivals are celebrated. It is hard to find a comparatively clean place to stay in the remote areas, and hot water bath is an unrealistic hope. In Tangke, the bend area of the Yellow River, you can stay in a tent in the travel camp, also quite expensive. You may stay in the inns in Waqie, or find a place to stay in Hongyuan County seat, 42 km from Waqie.
- **Food:** The south of Gansu and northwest of Sichuan mainly serve Muslim food, and the beef and mutton are all local products, absolutely fresh.
- **Vehicles:** It is best to have your own four-wheel-drive vehicle or you can rent a car in the nearby cities. However, it is difficult to rent a four-wheel-drive vehicle. You can take a regular bus to Maqu County town or Hongyuan County town and then rent a car. This is a good way to save some money.
- **Necessities:** Sun hat, sunglasses, sunscreen and medicine for preventing altitude sickness, such as Hongjingtian, a Tibetan herb.
- **Points for attention:** Customs and habits of the local ethnic groups have to be respected. For example, the Tibetan people avoid livestock with round hoofs and animals with claws. When entering or sitting in the tent, the man should be on the left and woman on the right. You can't light your cigarette on the buttered lamp offering for the Buddha, don't use your own cup to take water from the vat, and don't beat dogs without reason.



As their black long bill looks like a piba (a Chinese music instrument), the birds are also called the black-faced piba egrets.

SPOONBILLS

The Last Black-faced Dancers

Photos by Guo Yumin   Article by Di Zhiying

The black-faced spoonbill, the smallest in the Plataleidae family, is confined to the eastern fringe of the Asian coasts. The bird drew no attention from people until the 1990s when scientists began to investigate the birds' habitats and breeding sites. The news was disheartening, as they found that there were just several hundred such animals still existing in the world. Black-faced spoonbills have been struggling on the edge of extinction because of human encroachment.

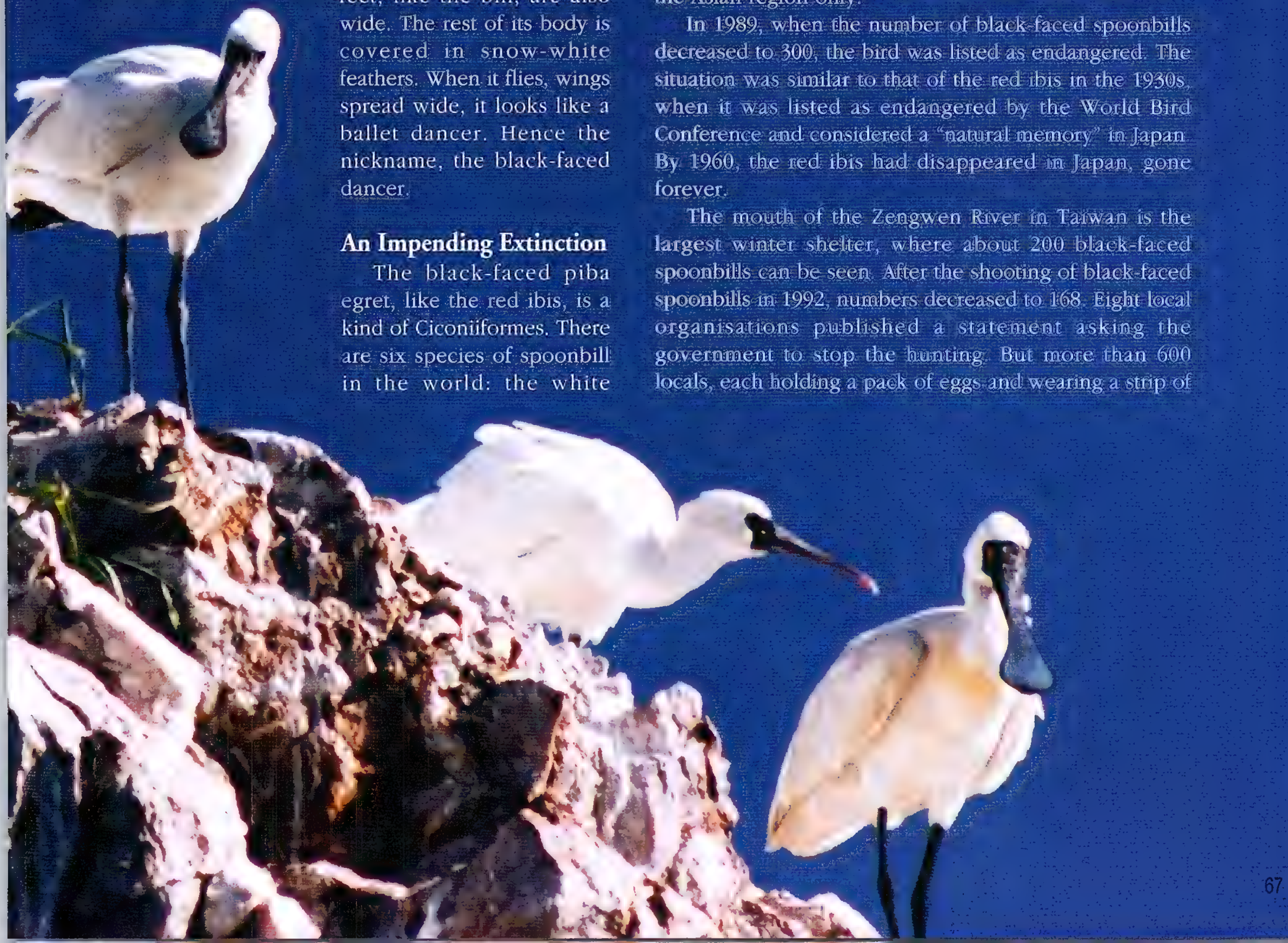
The black-faced spoonbill has a long flat beak. With a round and spoon-like front tip, the beak looks like a piba, a traditional Chinese musical instrument. This is why the bird is known as the piba egret. The bird seems to wear a black mask, which extends from its bill to face, covering the eyes. Its shins are long and black and its feet, like the bill, are also wide. The rest of its body is covered in snow-white feathers. When it flies, wings spread wide, it looks like a ballet dancer. Hence the nickname, the black-faced dancer.

An Impending Extinction

The black-faced piba egret, like the red ibis, is a kind of Ciconiiformes. There are six species of spoonbill in the world: the white spoonbill in Europe and Asia; the yellow-beaked spoonbill in Australia; the pink spoonbill in the Mexican Gulf and South America; the African spoonbill in Central and South Africa, as well as Madagascar; the royal spoonbill in Australia, New Zealand and some Pacific islands; and the black-faced spoonbill, which is found in the Asian region only.

In 1989, when the number of black-faced spoonbills decreased to 300, the bird was listed as endangered. The situation was similar to that of the red ibis in the 1930s, when it was listed as endangered by the World Bird Conference and considered a "natural memory" in Japan. By 1960, the red ibis had disappeared in Japan, gone forever.

The mouth of the Zengwen River in Taiwan is the largest winter shelter, where about 200 black-faced spoonbills can be seen. After the shooting of black-faced spoonbills in 1992, numbers decreased to 168. Eight local organisations published a statement asking the government to stop the hunting. But more than 600 locals, each holding a pack of eggs and wearing a strip of



white cloth on their heads, demonstrated and demanded the government to take the land from the birds to give to the people. They said it was not right to stop industrial development for the sake of 200 birds. Meanwhile, more than a dozen nature-protection associations in Taiwan published a statement, pointing out that the fate of the 200 black-faced spoonbills was not just a dilemma of a small interested group, nor was it a curb to industrial development. To take away the last habitat of the black-faced spoonbill means to drive it to extinction. The fight for land between birds and people drew attention from more than 30 international environmental protection organisations, including the World Wild Life Fund, the ICBP, and the Asian Wetland Protection Society. The China Bird Society also sent the local government a letter, calling for the preservation of the land for the black-faced spoonbills. Under such pressure, the industrial development plan was put aside. But so far, the area has not been listed as a nature reserve, and the black-faced spoonbills are still in danger.

Possible Breeding Fields

Experts have been working hard to find breeding fields in the mainland of China. In the 1920s, La Touch, a French scholar, tried to find nests in Fujian's coastal areas without success.

The Zhalong Nature Reserve, the Three River Plain and Lake Xingkai in Heilongjiang Province and the Xianghai Nature Reserve in Jilin Province were considered possible sites, but no nests were discovered after many years of searching. On some small islands off the west coast of the Korean Peninsula, near the 38th Parallel (MDL), young black-faced spoonbills were found. But they were too small a group. Where did the hundreds of birds spend their summer?

In 1997, some marked black-faced spoonbills were set free in Taiwan and Hong Kong. Through radio monitoring, one of the birds was found on the coastal strand between Ningbo and Wenzhou in Zhejiang Province. In 1998-1999, it was discovered that most of the black-faced spoonbills marked in Japan, Hong Kong or Taiwan passed China's Yancheng in Jiangsu Province, Wenzhou, and the Chongming Island. Zheng Guangmai, a Chinese expert, believed the waste isles outlying Liaoning and Shandong peninsulas could be the possible nesting areas. Meanwhile, inland marshlands were also the options, as black-faced spoonbills were caught in Nanchong, Sichuan Province, in November 1957 and Caohai Lake in Ningwei, Guizhou Province, in November 1975. Small groups were also seen every winter on Dongting Lake.

The China Bird Society distributed 2,000 questionnaires looking for black-faced spoonbills in March 1998. In a report returned from the Dalai Lake National Nature Reserve in Inner Mongolia, a man called Liu Songtao said that in April 1998, he watched six black-faced spoonbills feeding. It was the first time the bird was seen in China's inland waters. In 1996, after an inspection in Zhalong and Xingkai Lake, Dr. Lei Fumin of the Bird Research Institute under the China Academy of Sciences concluded that it was impossible to find breeding fields in the vast wetlands in China's Northeast, because there was too much human disturbance. The researchers then returned to Liaoning Peninsula. The natural conditions on Liaoning Peninsula, including its latitude, topography and climate, are very close to that of the birds' breeding fields in North Korea. So experts investigated many of the isles on the peninsula's coast.

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A Great Loss

In 1999, they found a breeding field on one of the Changshan Islands in the northern Yellow Sea. The isle in Ninghai County, Liaoning Province, known as Xingren Tuozi, had no people living on it. Covered with luxuriant vegetation, it also provides steep cliffs for nests. Located at N 39° 31' and E 123° 02', the quarter-square-kilometre isle is not marked on the map. Every summer, more than 30 species of bird come to this tiny island to breed. Half of the island is grass, the other half, rock. Black-faced spoonbills build nests in concavities on the cliffs.

When young birds come out of the shell in July, the parents fly a long distance to find food on mainland beaches after the tides ebb. They feed the babies every four hours. As the young birds grow, the interval is cut to one hour. Like the red ibis, the mother or father feeds the babies with digested liquid food. By the end of August, the young birds, two months old now, can fly off the nest. After three or four days of exercise, they can fly to the vast sea to feed themselves.

By September, the young birds are ready to fly to the south with their parents. In recent years, the isle has attracted many visitors, who come to shoot photos or TV programs. Their curiosity has caused a grave threat to reproduction.

1. Even when it flies high in the air, the black-faced spoonbill's spoon-like bill can be easily recognised.

2. These isles lying off the Liaoning Peninsula are possible breeding fields of the black-faced spoonbill.

3. Black-faced spoonbills build their nests in the recesses of the cliffs.

4. The newborn baby bird looks cute and lovely.

Co-operation between Birds

Zhou Haixiang, who works at the Shenyang Industrial College, has had his lens focused on the beautiful birds for over a decade, using his camera to record their lives. Zhou keeps to the principle of minimal disturbance to the birds when he shoots. He never approaches closer than 50 m, so always uses a 600 mm lens plus a double zoom.

Most of the birds on the isle are seagulls of various kinds. The Lanjidong, a rare bird, also breeds here. A pair of eagles has become good friends with Zhou. Zhou knows that eagles are good hunters, and he worries that they might kill the black-faced spoonbills. He hoped they would move their nest, but in 2001, before the black-faced spoonbills returned, the eagles had already built their new home and begun hatching babies. By the time Zhou arrived, the baby eagles were already there. As advised by experts, Zhou did not disturb the eagle family.

One day, because of the eagles, a baby yellow-beaked egret fell into the sea. All the adult birds flew up, some trying to help the baby, others struggling with the eagles, chirping loud. Some furious seagulls came to join the fight. In the end, the eagles had to give up. Zhou learned a lot from this event. "Biologists believe the animal world progresses by the law of nature," he said. "Although the saying of 'survivial of the fittest' holds true, there is also care and cooperation among animals."

Harsher Life Ahead

In 2002, Zhou began looking for feeding sites. He set up six observing spots on the coastline from Dandong to Dalian. To his surprise, there were many fishing nets down the coast, catching whatever the tide brought in. How could the black-faced spoonbills shovel up their food? Why is there no stable feeding base for them? It is because they cannot find a beach to provide them with enough food.

Where is the reliable food source for the black-faced spoonbills?

1. Photographing water birds to publicise the plight of rapidly diminishing habitat

2. This black-faced spoonbill, which had been marked with a ring by Japanese experts, appeared in the Mai Po Nature Reserve, Hong Kong, in January 2000.

The Current Conditions of Black-faced Spoonbills

Human activities have caused serious threat to black-faced spoonbills. Due to fast economic development, many wetlands have been destroyed. The Hong Kong Mai Po Nature Reserve, covering 300 ha, is a winter shelter for birds. For many years, property developers have been eyeing this piece of land. They put pressure on the government and even brought a lawsuit, trying to drive the birds out. Thanks to Hong Kong environmentalists, the wetland has been preserved, but new buildings are very close to the edge of the reserve. The Futian Mangrove Nature Reserve in Shenzhen has decreased from 400 ha to 200 ha. Recently, after many rounds of negotiation, the authorities finally agreed to change a planned highway through the area to an elevated freeway. But many projects around the nature reserve, such as the land reclamation program in Shenzhen Bay, the harnessing project on the Shenzhen River, and construction in the south, have gravely affected the environment. Black-faced spoonbills in Guangxi and Hainan vanished totally in 2001. Obviously, the water birds have lost hope of survival there.

Himalayan Range

Photos by Sun Chengyi

Situated in Asia, the Himalayan (Sanskrit word meaning "abode of snow") Range separates India on the south from the vast Tibetan plateau of China on the north. It includes the world's highest mountains, such as Mt. Everest (8,850 m), K2 (8,611 m), and Kanchenjunga (8,598 m).

Shooting Maple in Kyoto

Photos & Article by Xu Xiong

▲ **Kyoto is one of the ancient cities of Japan. The maple trees are mainly located in town or in scattered temples in the suburbs. 80mm Hasselblad lens, ISO100 reversal film, 1/60s, F11.**

▲ **A trail of sunlight goes through the dense towering canopy and shines on the red leaves. 250mm Hasselblad lens, ISO100 reversal film, F5.6.**

The air of Kyoto is filled with the smell of autumn because of the blazing maple leaves in the city, and the leaves in the lanes and temples attract numerous photographic fans here every year.

In mid November last year, I went to Kyoto with my friends, taking all my photographic equipment with me for some great autumn pictures. At noon, the plane landed at Kansai International Airport in Osaka. I looked out of the window and sighed. It didn't look like autumn at all and I started to worry. My friend Ah Chung tried to cheer me up. "It's going to be fine. It'll be different when we get to Kyoto. I'm sure you'll be delighted."

Early next morning, the sky was dark with intermittent rain. I couldn't help worrying that our plans would be affected by bad weather, and that we would come with excitement and leave with disappointment. But soon we realised that our worries were groundless. We first visited one of the most famous maple viewing spots, Nanzenji. We could see maple trees blazing with red, yellow and green leaves everywhere, and the leaves were swaying in the wind. The absence of the sun didn't affect the scenery at all. Leaves fluttering to the ground made a red carpet to welcome visitors who had flown a long way to Japan. Every year, a flood of photographers is attracted to the spot for its reputation. Even those who are not expert photographers try to capture the picturesque scenes. It's as beautiful as a fantasy world.

In the next few days, we visited Arashiyama and Sagano as well. As we strolled along the path in the countryside, the autumnal atmosphere was enriched by the cool breeze caressing our faces. Leaves on the trees along mountain,

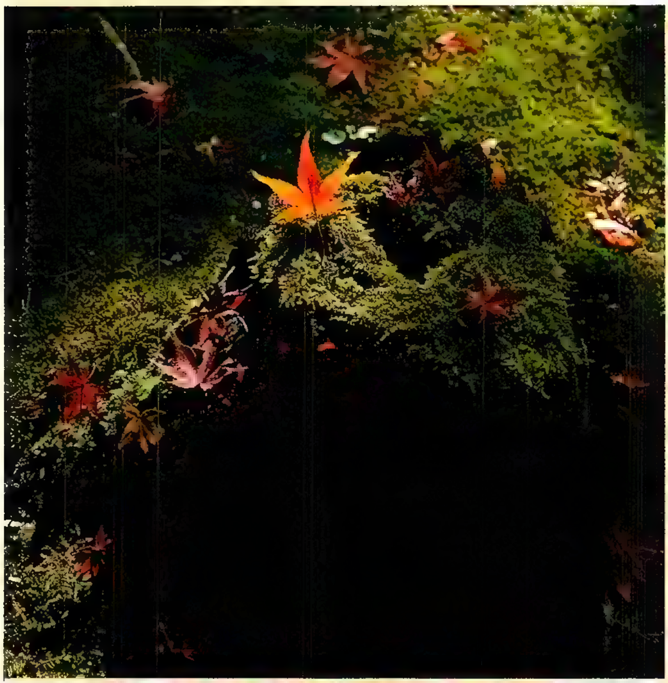
▲ **The fallen leaves. 80mm Hasselblad lens, 1/60s, F5.6.**

The temples and maple leaves form a great contrast in terms of colours. 120mm Hasselblad lens, ISO100 reversal, film 1/15s, F11.

streams and river valleys all changed colour. We were carried away by this multicoloured scene.

We were intoxicated by the city's beauty and took dozens of pictures of maple trees. Eight days flew by, and our only regret was that we couldn't stay longer. On the way home, we both agreed that we would go back again if we get a chance.

▼ **Zooming in on the leaves can show all the veins clearly. 80mm Hasselblad lens, 1/60s, F8.**



▼ **Reddish leaves with the limpid water. 120mm Hasselblad lens, ISO100 reversal film, 1/30s, F11.**

▲ **Nearly all cities in Japan have their own maple landscapes, but only Kyoto has so many classic courtyards that complement the maples. 80mm Hasselblad lens, ISO100 reversal film, 1/8s, F11.**

▲ **In mid-autumn, Kyoto attracts people from all over the world for the maples. 80mm Hasselblad lens, ISO100 reversal film, 1/8s, F11. A slower shutter shows the flow of people clearly.**

▲ **In the middle of November, the maple trees in Kyoto are at their most gorgeous. 120mm Hasselblad lens, ISO100 reversal film, 1/60s, F8.**

Notes

Photographic apparatus: 120 medium telephoto camera or 135 camera is suitable for maple shooting; zoom lenses are great helpers. Wide lenses can be used for large scenes and the extensive fallen leaves on the meadow. Zoom lenses are used for close-up and it's better to use them for the micro world. A tripod is recommended, but in order to avoid obstruction, most of the temples in Japan forbid the use of tripods. If the weather is not so good, high-speed film (for example, ISO 200 and ISO 400) is an alternative. If a digital camera is used, a higher ISO can be adjusted.

Shooting remarks: As so many tourists come to see the maples, it's better to shoot early in the morning as there will be less people. Overcast and rainy days are also a good time as tourists stay away and the mood is different.

Admission: The range is 300 - 500 yen (~US $3-5) for most temples in Japan.

Accommodation: Middle to late November is the best time for maple viewing, accommodation will be very tight, so it is better to book in advance.

MOSUO
THE MATRIARCHY OF THE FAR EAST

Photos & Article by Patrick Blanche

The Mosuo is a branch of Naxi people living in Yongning district, an area about a one-hour bus ride from Lugu Lake, between Yunnan and Sichuan provinces. They maintain a matriarchal social system, and their identity is strongly influenced by an old nomadic culture.

Women are in charge of the family here, and they work, control their household budget and receive visitors. Furthermore, the Mosuo children take their mother's surname.

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When a Mosuo boy falls in love with a girl, he would go to her house after dark and stay till the next morning. Their romance could last for several nights or years. The boy is considered an "azhu", a friend. Some particularly beautiful girls may have as many as 300 azhu. The azhu are exempted from any economic responsibility, and have no attachment to the girl's family. But if the relationship continues and they have children, he will start working in the fields with the girl's family. Only after getting family consent can he officially move to his new house.

Nobody knows exactly how a society so different from

the rest of China developed. Some anthropologists think the matrilineal system can be traced back as far as the origins of humanity, a small pocket that survived through isolation. The custom of brief courtship was probably started in the past, when most men were nomadic farmers, Buddhist

1. The Lugu Lake is located at the border of Yi Autonomous County in Ninglang in Yunnan Province and Yanyuan County in Sichuan Province. Formed by the downthrows of a geological fault, the lake is the highest and the second deepest lake in Yunnan.
2. The Mosuo ladies like to wear colourful garments and white folding skirts with sashes tied round their waists.
3. The friendly Mosuo men

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monks and soldiers. Some even believe that the tradition came from feudal times. Back then, every man had to offer money and horses to the tribal chief before marriage. The poorer men just had to visit their lover during the night and then go back to their mother's house early the next morning.

Pietr Goullardn, a Russian man who once lived in Yunnan, maintained the theory of "sly feminist revolution". In his book Kingdom forgotten published in 1955, he said that women, previously reduced to slaves, did not revolt. But rather, they slowly took ascendance over men and eventually became experts of trade. Their husbands and sons had no other choice but to ask them for money to buy tobacco. The women also became stronger physically, and with strength they gained authority. For men, marriage became a way to enjoy an easy life, and they lived off their mothers and sisters. As they got older, they stayed in the house, taking care of the children and smoking opium for fun. These myths soon led many men to Lugu Lake to look for easy girls.

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Where Culture Echoes and Beauty Enthrals

The truth is, although Mosuo women are probably more emancipated than most Chinese women, they are far from debauched. The custom there confers women the right to meet many partners, yet, once married, women generally stay faithful to their husband. On the other hand, the married men are responsible for fishing and fieldwork.

Aside from the exotic culture, this place is incredibly beautiful. The water of the lake surrounded by mountains is very pure. No motorised boats are allowed here, and there are just simple wooden boats rowed by strong women. Passengers are ferried from villages on either side of the lake.

My friend Dominique and I went to this region in March 2004. From Lijiang we took a minibus for seven hours on narrows road surrounded by dry landscape to reach Lugu Lake, a sanctuary in the middle of nowhere. For a week, we discovered the region by riding horses.

One day, after a full day riding up and down the hills, we stopped for a break near the quiet waters of the lake, when we saw a Mosuo woman coming back from the fields. She invited us to afternoon tea in her communally-built wooden house. Inside the house everything is concentrated around a central stove. The fire is left burning nonstop for cooking and heating. The atmosphere is relaxed and food was quickly offered to us — not just any food, but the succulent Sichuan ham, well known all over the country for its taste and rich nutrition.

Invited to Festivals

Night was coming and the family asked us to stay for the night. A simple but very authentic and warm place to stay. Neighbours came to visit us, curious about the strangers in their midst. We received a fantastic welcome, and the next day our hosts showed us the road to follow. Life seems to flow so peacefully here.

After an agreeable day we met some local herding boys, silent eyes under their hats, wearing colourful silk clothes embellished by Chinese motifs. They brought us to a big house for the night. Here the small community was preparing the next day's wedding celebration for a young Mosuo couple. All the villagers take part in the festivities. These days were to be our best days during our trip in China. There were endless dancing, singing prayers, feasting and fun. Even though the Mosuo people are not materially rich, their independent spirit, confidence and genuine smiles won our admiration.

According to the Chinese tourist promoters, the Lugu Lake between Sichuan and Yunnan province is nothing but an "Oriental Women's Kingdom"— an image from the mythic Shangri-la described by James Hilton in 1920 in his book Lost Horizon. Here, women take care of their children, whether they are girls or boys. This is a strong contrast with the rest of China where sometimes girls are abandoned at birth because they are discriminated against. However, life in the Mosuo area restores balance.

It used to take a week or more to reach to Lugu Lake from the nearest village on horse. Only adventurers would risk the ride. But in 1993, the government invested 2.8 million US dollars for tourist development of the region. Since then, tourists can travel here in 10 hours by cars from the nearest airport. More and more tourists are getting away from the big cities, and coming to this mystical place to relax. For the last two years, another narrow road has been under construction around the lake and visitors will be able to travel here even more easily.

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The convenient transportation brings other problems though. For instance, it seems that ethnic assimilation is putting the Mosuo group in danger. Similar trend has already begun in Tibet. The slow and silent death of the Mosuo culture is almost guaranteed. I'm afraid that when our children were to come here to look for the "women's kingdom", the Mosuo children would tell them that it was just a wonderful legend.

1. **The veil adds mystery to the already exotic tribal lady.**
2. **The genuine smile of Mosuo people won my admiration.**
3. **The Mosuo children grow up with their mother and uncles. They inherit their surname from their mother, and they don't know who their father is.**
4. **Mosuo women usually have their long hair tied into a bun.**
5. **An elder Mosuo woman**

Patrick Blanche

A French photographer who didn't find his voyage to Kunming, Dali and Lijiang of Yunnan Province excited enough for him and his friend, Dominique. Inspired by a picture in a Yunnan travelogue, the duo ended up visiting Lugu Lake and had the trip of their lifetime.

Harbin The Winter Wonderland

Photos & Article by Mehdi Chebil Link

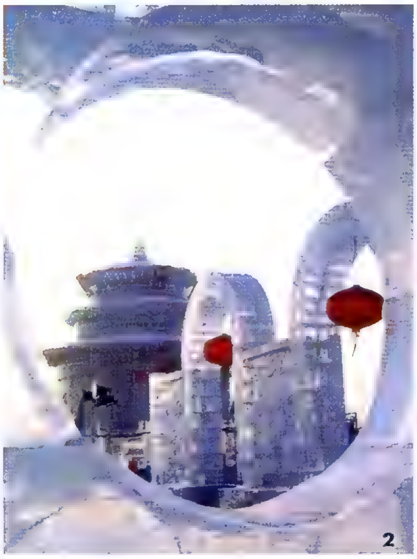
This capital of Heilongjiang province is the absolute winter wonderland. Located across the border of Russian Siberia, Harbin experiences temperatures as low as -30°C in winter. This may not be your average holidays destination, but the increasing popularity of the Ice Lantern Festival could well make you change your mind.

Having a Siberian climate, Harbin needs something really impressive to attract thousands of travellers. Back in 1985, someone came up with the idea of holding an annual Ice Sculptures Festival between January and March. The idea was brilliant because its unique climate is perfect for such outdoor art exhibition. The materials are cheaply available: the nearby Songhua River freezes in winter and offers thousands of large ice blocks. From there, artists chainsaw and polish these ice blocks into beautiful sculptures, which are then set up around town, and in the city's parks.

Opening Ceremony

I was strolling in Beijing's Wangfujing Boulevard when I first came across impressive billboards depicting Harbin's finest ice sculptures. This fairytale vision didn't leave me, and I promptly arranged to catch an overnight train in order to get there for the Festival's opening ceremony. When I arrived, several workers were still inside the exhibition park, finishing off a few sculptures' details. As the sky was darkening — the sun set at 4 pm in Harbin! — the visitors were getting more excited.

There was a large cosmopolitan crowd for the opening ceremony:



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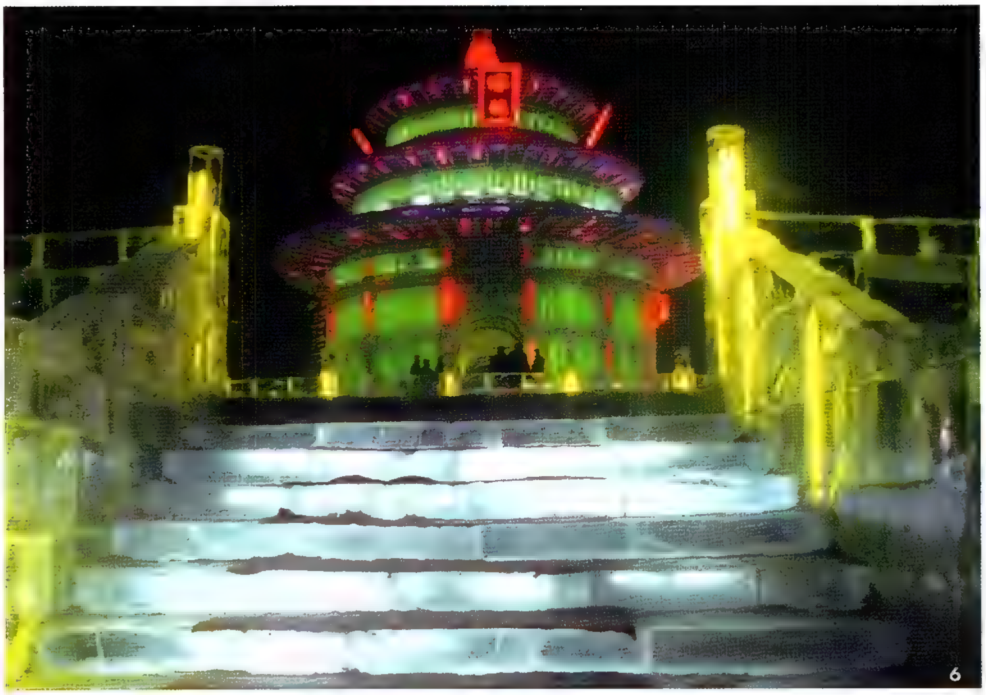
locals taking the whole family out, foreigners, Cantonese-speaking tour groups, photographers and TV crews. Most people gathered between two large buildings made of ice, a colourful Temple of Heaven and a massive reproduction of the Three Gorges Dam. As soon as the first firework burst into the freezing night, the visitors exploded in a loud cheer and didn't turn their eyes away from the skies for the following 20 minutes! Meanwhile, a powerful sound system started blasting patriotic songs over the loud speakers, driving the people even more enthusiastic.

Massive Ice Architecture

Once the atmosphere became a bit quieter, there was still plenty of time to explore Harbin's biggest ice buildings exhibition. The venue is often nicknamed the "World of Ice" because it stages massive sculptures that qualify more as architectural works rather than ice carvings. Those sculptures are different every year, but they are always related to famous world landmarks.

This year's edition featured a large reproduction of the Turkey's famous Blue Mosque, a Russian church with its emblematic onion-shaped roof, and a copy of Beijing's Temple of Heaven. All of them were made of ice blocks piled like bricks, and they were big enough for people to walk inside at their risk, since the ice floor naturally tends to be slippery!

Slippery ice is actually all part of the fun, and several activities are organised to keep you warm while the temperature plummet to -30°C. Kids spontaneously go for the dozens of ice toboggans scattered among the sculptures while adults can test-drive the nerve-wrecking snow bikes on a small circuit. I personally went for a maze made of large ice walls, where I got miserably lost.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International Ice Carving Contest

Another not-to-be-missed spot in Harbin is Zhaolin Park. It has a stunning collection of smaller ice sculptures, lining the park's alley. An ingenious lighting system set up inside the ice blocks makes the larger sculptures shine from the inside, emphasising the surrealist impression of the visitor to be in a wonderland.

A small plaza inside Zhaolin Park is dedicated to an international ice carving competition. People come from all over the world to take part, and I was surprised to meet competitors from tropical countries like Malaysia, India, or Burundi. One Malaysian fellow confined me that the only way to train back home was to set up a large freezer and practice on small ice blocks!

I ended up leaving Harbin with one idea in mind: coming back for next year Ice Festival and spending a bit more time in Heilongjiang, checking out the splendid Russian architecture and the famous ski resorts in the surroundings.

After I came back to Shanghai, I was assaulted by questions about the weather such as "how does -20°C feel like?" Surprisingly, it's far from being unbearable for people who are well prepared. The most important things are getting good winter gear for feet, hands, nose, and ears, and never heading out without them!

1. Harbin's most famous landmark — the Saint Sofia Church of Russian style
2. A reproduction of the Temple of Heaven seen through an ice window
3. Hostesses from the Ice Festival
4. A reproduction of Turkey's famous Blue Mosque. Colourful light tubes fitted inside the ice blocks make the large sculpture glow in the night.
5. The firework of the festival's opening ceremony and the large icy boat
6. The Ice Temple of Heaven glowing in the freezing night (beware of slippery stairways!)

FOCUS ON XINJIANG

On the vast land of Xinjiang in Northwest China, there are mountains, basins, deserts and lakes, all providing tourists with numerous attractions — ruins of ancient cities and tombs along the Silk Road; Turpan, an oasis in the desert; Kanas Lake, a gem embedded in the Altay Mountains; Bayanbulak, the Swan Lake; and the world's second largest desert, the Taklimakan. The minority ethnic groups living in Xinjiang, such as the Uygur, Kazak, Mongolian, Uzbek, Tajik, Xibe, Kirgiz and Tatar, all have their own unique and colourful culture.

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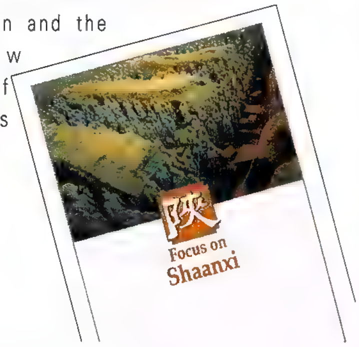
Focus on
Xinjiang

FOCUS ON SHAANXI

Shaanxi is the cradle of the Chinese civilisation and Xi'an was the capital of 13 dynasties. This has left Shaanxi a rich legacy of historical sites and cultural relics. In the provincial capital Xi'an, there is the fascinating terracotta army unearthed from the tomb of the First Emperor, Qin Shihuang; the tomb of Tang-dynasty Wu Zetian, China's first empress; and the stele forest. The province's beauty is capped with the sheer cliffs of Mount Huashan and the yellow earth of the Loess Plateau.



FOCUS ON YUNNAN

The mountainous wonderland of Yunnan enjoys a favourable warm climate all year round. Its capital, Kunming, sitting alongside Yunnan's largest lake, Dianchi, has the honourable name of "Spring City". The province is full of natural wonders and cultural relics, such as the Stone Forests, the Shangri-la, and the ancient cities of Dali and Lijiang. With over 20 diverse ethnic groups making up about one-third of the population, opportunities abound for you to see their characteristic cultures and customs.

滇
Focus on
Yunnan

The Call of China's West

FOCUS ON TIBET

The Tibet Autonomous Region of China is a land of mystery for tourists, a land of wonders for explorers, a land of purity for Buddhists, and the ultimate challenge for mountaineers. Its beautiful landscapes, unique geographical features and rich cultural legacy continue to attract an increasing number of visitors.

The countless attractions of Tibet make it impossible to include them all in one book. This photographic publication offers an introduction to some of the Region's most celebrated features: the Potala Palace and its precious collection of cultural relics; the Jokhang Temple with strings of worshippers prostrating themselves before it; the Shoton Festival and the Sunning of Buddha ceremony; the ruins of the mystical Guge Kingdom; and the amazing Qiangtang Grassland....

At the same time, *Focus on Tibet* outlines the six major routes to Tibet and the many stunning landscapes found along the way.

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Focus on Tibet
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FOCUS ON GUIZHOU

Guizhou is a land of splendid natural scenery. Its towering mountains and karst landforms team up with the gurgling rivers and magnificent waterfalls to form a wonderful work of Mother Nature. Huangguoshu Waterfalls and the limestone caves are the province's most frequented scenic spots. The 17 ethnic groups living in the picturesque province further colour the land with vivid customs and joyous festivals. It is its natural beauty and culture that make Guizhou a perfect travel destination.

黔
Focus on
Guizhou

FOCUS ON GUANGXI

Unusual topography has endowed the province with numerous spectacular karst formations — limestone caves, pinnacles and rocks. The most famous and enchanting scenic spot is Guilin, and the most travelled route, on the Lijiang River from Guilin to Yangshuo. The coastal city of Beihai has the country's largest beach, the Silver Beach. Other attractions include the diverse traditional customs of ethnic minorities, the Sino-Vietnamese border area, and the mysterious Huashan cliff paintings.

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CHINA TOURISM
THE INVISIBLE GREAT WALL
294

Readership Survey

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The Last Black-faced Dancers: Spoonbills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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Others:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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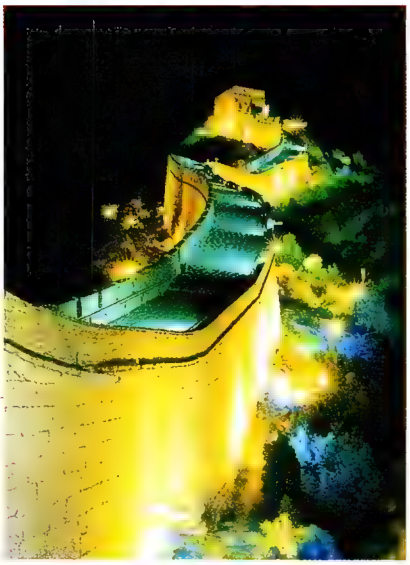
BITS AND PIECES ABOUT THE GREAT WALL



The Great Wall is so symbolic that if you are visiting China for the first time, you shouldn't miss it. Different parts of the Great Wall were built in different dynasties, but the best-preserved part is the Ming Section, which scattered in different provinces of China.

Jizhen Great Wall is the most famous and accessible part of the Ming Great Wall. It starts from Shanhaiguan Pass and ends at Badaling, laying at the northern part of Hebei Province and crosses Beijing Municipality. As there are a lot of attractions along and nearby this section of the Great Wall, visitors should take their time and be ready to immerse in the historical atmosphere.

MAJOR ATTRACTIONS

(Hebei and Beijing Section)

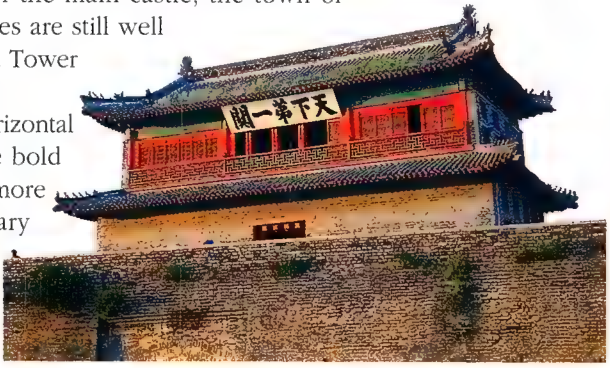
Shanhaiguan Pass

Shanhaiguan Pass is the starting point of Jizhen Great Wall. It is a small, sleepy town and port of the northern section of the Bohai gulf, holding access between northeast China and north China. Laying 17 km from the tourist city of Qinhuangdao, Shanhaiguan Pass got its name from being situated between the Yanshan Mountains and the Bohai Sea.

The Shanhaiguan Pass was located at the centre of the town. It was built in 583 and had been renovated throughout various dynasties. In Ming Dynasty, it was transformed into a formidable military stronghold.

Because of its strategic position, Shanhaiguan Pass is considered the No.1 pass of Great Wall and the key to the defense of two ancient capitals, namely Beijing in the east and Chang'an (Xi'an) in the west. It consists of a main castle, two supporting castles, two semicircular protective walls in front of the main castle, the town of Weiyuan and the town of Ninghai. Today, most of these structures are still well preserved, while others, such as the wall of Ninghai, the Calm Sea Tower and the Laolongtou Great Wall have been restored.

On the east gate of the city wall stands a tower hung with a horizontal inscribed board reading "The First Pass Among the World". The bold characters written in vigorous strokes make the pass look even more magnificent. The Gate Tower houses an array of ancient military uniforms and weapons, including a saber that weighs 83 kg, the heaviest in the country. Once you ascend the tower and take a broad view afar, the serried battlements and the rising mist will take you back to the ancient battlefields thousand years ago.



Beidaihe

Beidaihe, situated 30 km from Shanhaiguan Pass on the southwest of Qinhuangdao, is a famous scenic summer resort. An alluring coastal village with a small-town ambience, its charm lies mostly in the lively inhabitants, bustling night stalls and of course, the smell of the sea. From long stretches of pebbled sand to small coves, it is easy for travellers to escape from urban life.

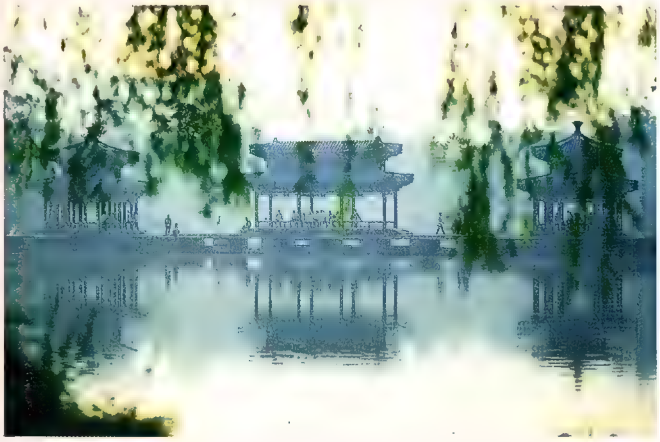
The scenery around Beidaihe is beautiful. Mt. Lianfeng, which backs the beach, has two peaks covered by abundant green pines and cypresses. Lush vegetation, strange caves, decorated pavilions, secluded paths and winding bridges cover the mountain. Looking down from Wanghaiting (Seaside Pavilion) at the top of the hill, one can feel the majesty of the sea. Beidaihe is also one of nine famous sun-rise watching spots in China. The Yinjiao Pavilion, on the northwest beach of Beidaihe, is the best place to watch sun rise.

Chengde Mountain Resort and Temples

The Chengde Mountain Resort, also known as the Summer Villa, is located at Chengde City of Hebei Province, 250 km from Shanhaiguan Pass. It is the largest imperial garden in modern China. It covers a total area of 564 km^2, and is twice as large as the Summer Palace in Beijing.

Chengde was first discovered by Qing Emperors Kangxi when he was heading north to hunt. He found it a gorgeous place and got the idea of building a summer resort here. The construction started in 1703, but was not finished until 89 years later at the supervision of Kangxi's grandson Qianlong. Grand palaces, delicate temples, peculiar mountains, exquisite pavilions and tranquil waters accompanied the emperors when they were here for the summer vacation.

Mountain Resort of Chengde can be divided into two main parts: Palace Area and Scenic Area. The palace itself was where the emperor lived, handled state affairs and held celebrations or ceremonies. It is made up of the Main Palace, the Crane Temple, Wanhe Songfeng and the East Palace.



The scenic area includes a Lake District, Plains District and a Mountainous District. The Lake District is a miniature of the landscape of southern Chinese villages. The western part of the Plain District illustrates a grassland scene from Inner Mongolia while the eastern part are ancient trees like the forests of Greater Xingan Mountain.

To the northeast of the Mountain Resort is a monumental temple complex composed of eight outer temples which were built from 1713 (the 52nd year of the reign of Emperor Kangxi) to 1789 (the 45th year of Emperor Qianlong's reign). They drew on architectural styles of the Han palace and ethnic groups such as Mongolian, Tibetan and Ugyur.

The Pule, Puning and Xumi Fushou temples are the main structures of the complex. The Hall of Brightness in the Pule Temple which has a double-eave and doom roof is similar to the buildings at Temple of Heaven in Beijing. In the Hall of the Bodhisattva of Puning Temple, there is a 22.23-m-high Bodhisattva. The statue weighs 110 tn and is the highest and largest wood statue in the world.

Badaling Great Wall

Badaling is located at Yanqing County, about 70 km northwest from the centre of Beijing City. It was the earliest section that opened to tourists among all other parts of the Great Wall. 130 million tourists from China and abroad have visited Badaling and 370 foreign leaders and very important persons have come to climb Badaling successively.

Badaling became a very important military strategic place since the Spring and Autumn Period (770 BC - 476 BC) and the Warring States Period (476 BC - 221 BC). Many incomplete parts of the wall were proved to be built in the Warring States Period. It is at the highest point of the northern end of Guan'gou gorge, in which the Juyongguan Pass lies. The wall of Badaling has a total length of 3, 741 m with an average height of eight metres. The top of the wall can permit five horses to be ridden abreast. On the highest place, signal fire platforms were set to send warning signals in the ancient China. One fire with one smoke means the enemy is about 100 men; two fires with two smoke means 500 men, and three fires with three smoke means more than 1,000 men.

Near Badaling, there is a large-scaled Great-Wall-of-China Museum as well as the Great Wall National Theater from which you can get a full and complete view of the Great Wall.

Mutianyu Great Wall

Laying some 70 km north-east of Beijing City, this section of the Great Wall winds its way for over 2000 m. Mutianyu Great Wall is well preserved and is a good alternative for visitors who would like to avoid crowds along the highly popular Badaling section during holiday and peak seasons.

The construction of this section was started in the mid-6th century during China's Northern Dynasties (386 - 581) and what now remains is the main restoration made during the Ming Dynasty (1368 - 1644). It has served as a northern barrier of Beijing through the ages. Connected with Juyongguan Pass in the west and Gubeikou Gateway in the east, this section was built along steep ridges and deep valleys. You can mount steps to climb the wall but it is physically demanding. So it is better to take the cable for a single trip at 35 yuan or a round trip at 50.

The surrounding mountains of the Wall are densely covered with verdant plants and tall ancient trees. In autumn, the maple leaves with their bright shades are truly amazing. In recent years, a garden party is usually held in autumn. Tourists can enjoy the sights of festive bonfires, performances in ancient costumes and other entertaining programs.

Temple of Heaven

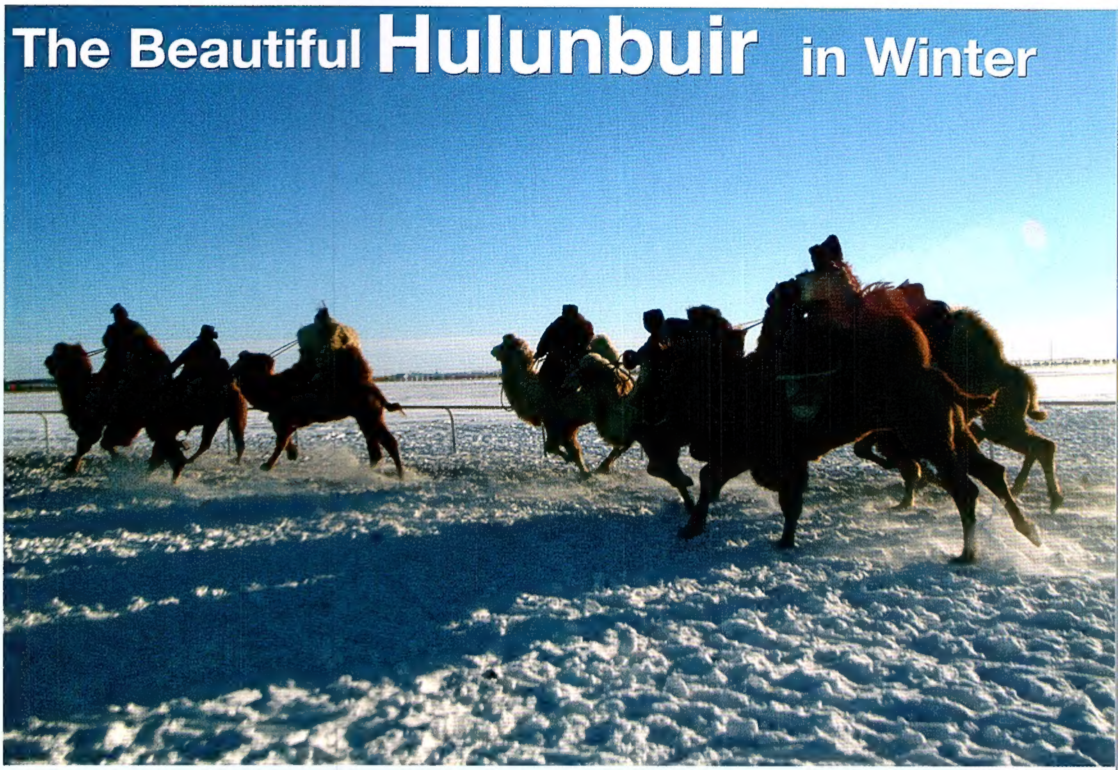
After the trip to Badaling and Mutianyu Great Wall, you may want to take a break from the steep trails. The Temple of Heaven in Beijing city would be a perfect choice. The Temple was built in 1420 during the Ming Dynasty to offer sacrifice to Heaven. It is much bigger than the Imperial Palace as the Chinese emperors dared not build their own dwelling bigger than the dwelling for Heaven.

Temple of Heaven is enclosed with a long wall. The northern part within the wall is semicircular symbolising the heavens, and the southern part is square symbolising the earth. This reflects the ancient Chinese thinking that "the heaven is round and the earth is square".

The Hall of Prayer for Good Harvest is a big palace with round roof and three layers of eaves. Inside the Hall are 28 huge posts. The four posts along the inner circle represent four seasons; the 12 posts along the middle circle represent the 12 months; and 12 posts along the outer circle represent 12 Shichen, which stand for 12 ancient China time zone. The roof is covered with black, yellow and green coloured glaze representing the heavens, the earth and everything on earth.

HIGHLIGHTS OF ISSUE NO. 295

Feature Story: The Beautiful Hulunbuir in Winter



Located north and west of the Greater Xinggan Mountains, the Hulunbuir Grasslands are one of the most verdant places in China. They are known locally as the most unsullied prairie, because of the lack of pollution.

Many minorities with strong ethnic custom such as Mongolians are concentrated in Hulunbuir. And since the land is fed by hundreds of large and small rivers, this area is highly popular with the nomads and herders.

The vast green land here stretches in all directions in summer, but the place is covered with snow and ice landscape for more than seven months in a year, with a temperature as low as -43°C!

Visitors can try many activities, including horse & camel riding, Mongolian wrestling, tribal dancing, spending a night in the yurts and feeding on the mutton courses in a traditional banquet.

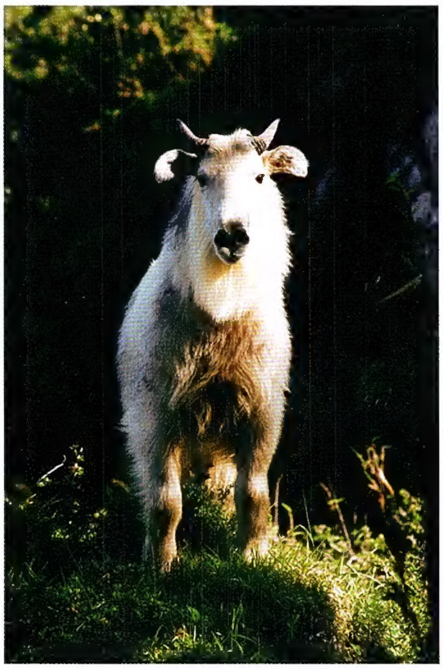
Challenge: Flying in the Sky of Dunhuang

On October 1, 2004, the working group of the Apsaras' Trip, a program sponsored by the Jiayuguan TV Station, set off from Jiayuguan, the west end of the Great Wall, to fly over the Great Wall to reach the edge of Lop Nur.

During the eight-day journey covering 1,500 km, we shot various charming scenes in the Dunhuang area from a motorised parachute, including that of the Yueya (Crescent) Spring, Dunhuang National Geopark for Yardan Formations, Mogao Grottoes, Yumenguan Pass, Yangguan Pass, Hecang City, and Anxi's Suoyang City.

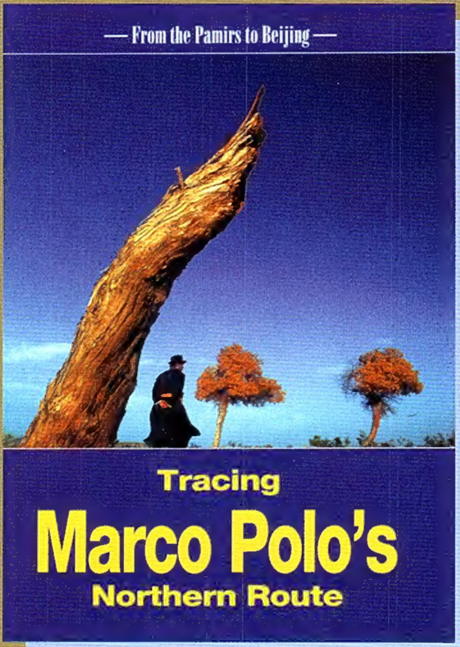
Nature: Takins of Qinling Mountains

As the demarcation line of southern and northern China, the Qinling Mountains with complicated topography, varied climate and abundant ecological resources have become a "natural gene pool" of fauna and flora. Among various species of living things in the mountains, the takin is the Class A protected animal of China. Heavily built yet nimble and quick, the animals resemble neither goat nor ox. They live at the altitude up to 3,000 m.



Photographic & Practical Guides for Your China Tours

Before you set off for your perfect journey, you may have to prepare your itinerary carefully. Each of the following recommended readings offers different types of information which cater to our readers' various interests: exploring, photography, or tourist information. They will be great guides to your China tours.


— From the Pamirs to Beijing —
Tracing
Marco Polo's
Northern Route

Tracing Marco Polo's Northern Route

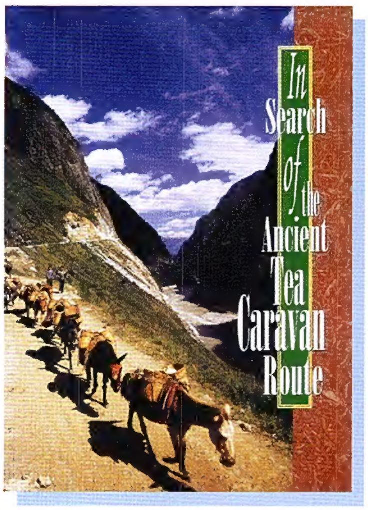
A record of an 80-day journey in which our authors drive their jeep 12,000 km long through the northern regions of China following in the footsteps of Macro Polo's historic journey from the Pamir Highland to Beijing. In a medley of images and words, we present you with the fascinating scenery and various ways of life in Xinjiang, Qinghai, Gansu, Ningxia, Inner Mongolia, and Tibet.

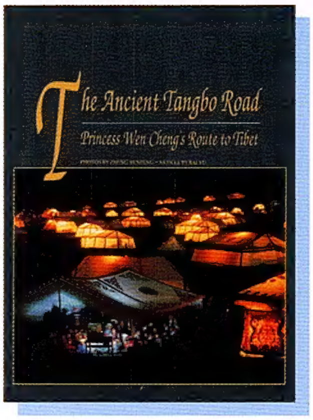
HK$156

In Search of the Ancient Tea Caravan Route

The ancient Tea Caravan Route can be traced back to 2,000 years ago, starting from Xishuangbanna at China's southwestern end, passing through boundless forests and valleys to the Sino-Indian, Nepalese and Sikkimese borders on Tibet, the "Roof of the World". This book is not-to-be-missed by every daring adventurer.

HK$192

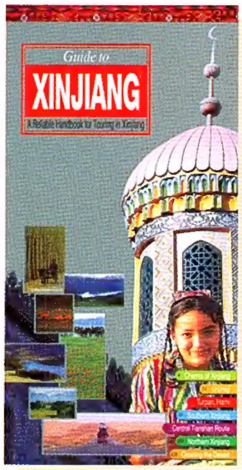

In Search of the Ancient Tea Caravan Route


The Ancient Tangbo Road
Princess Wen Cheng's Route to Tibet

The Ancient Tangbo Road

Covering four provinces including Shaanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, and the Tibet Autonomous Region, the ancient Tangbo Road was created on the map when Princess Wen Cheng was sent as a bride to Luoxie (present-day Lhasa) during the Tang Dynasty. Our photographers and writers, who have followed this arduous route, present you the graceful sights and unique ethnic customs on the way.

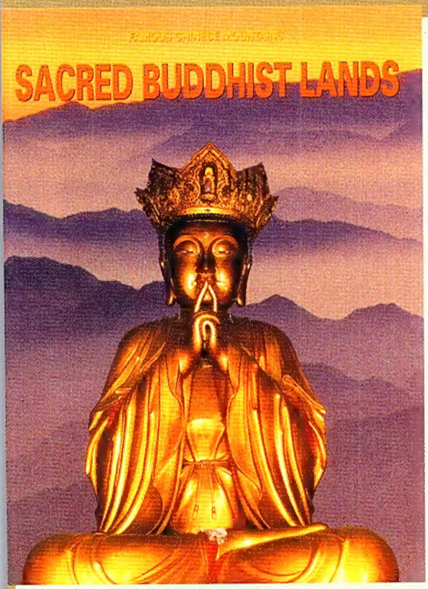
HK$192


Guide to
XINJIANG
A Reliable Handbook for Touring in Xinjiang

Guide to Xinjiang

This book is especially designated for DIY travellers who desire to explore the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. There are detailed introduction to scenic spots in five main areas in Xinjiang including Urümqi, Turpan, Southern and Northern Xinjiang, and Central Tianshan. Practical tourist information on accommodation, ticketing, shopping, local specialty, as well as travel tips are covered.

HK$96

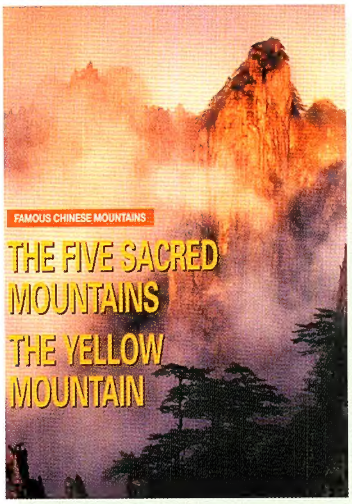


Sacred Buddhist Lands

Buddhism in China is inevitably linked with some of the country's best known mountains. And going deep in the mountains and far away from civilization is an ideal place for retreat. Belonging to the four Bodhisattvas respectively, the four most famous Buddhist mountains — Wutai, Jiuhua, Putuo and Emei — are nestled with numerous monasteries and nunneries which have been worshipped by pilgrims for thousands of years. Tourists to these places will totally be soaked in "Kingdoms of Buddhism".

HK$156

The Five Sacred Mountains
The Yellow Mountain



Located in five provinces in China, every of the Five Sacred Mountains — Taishan, Hengshan, Songshan, Hengshan and Huashan — has its magnificent natural and cultural landscapes. Besides, Huangshan (Yellow Mountain), is also famous for its spectacular rocks, pine trees, and sea of clouds. It will be a great enjoyment in reading both the detailed text and remarkable images by our experienced photographers as recorded in this book.

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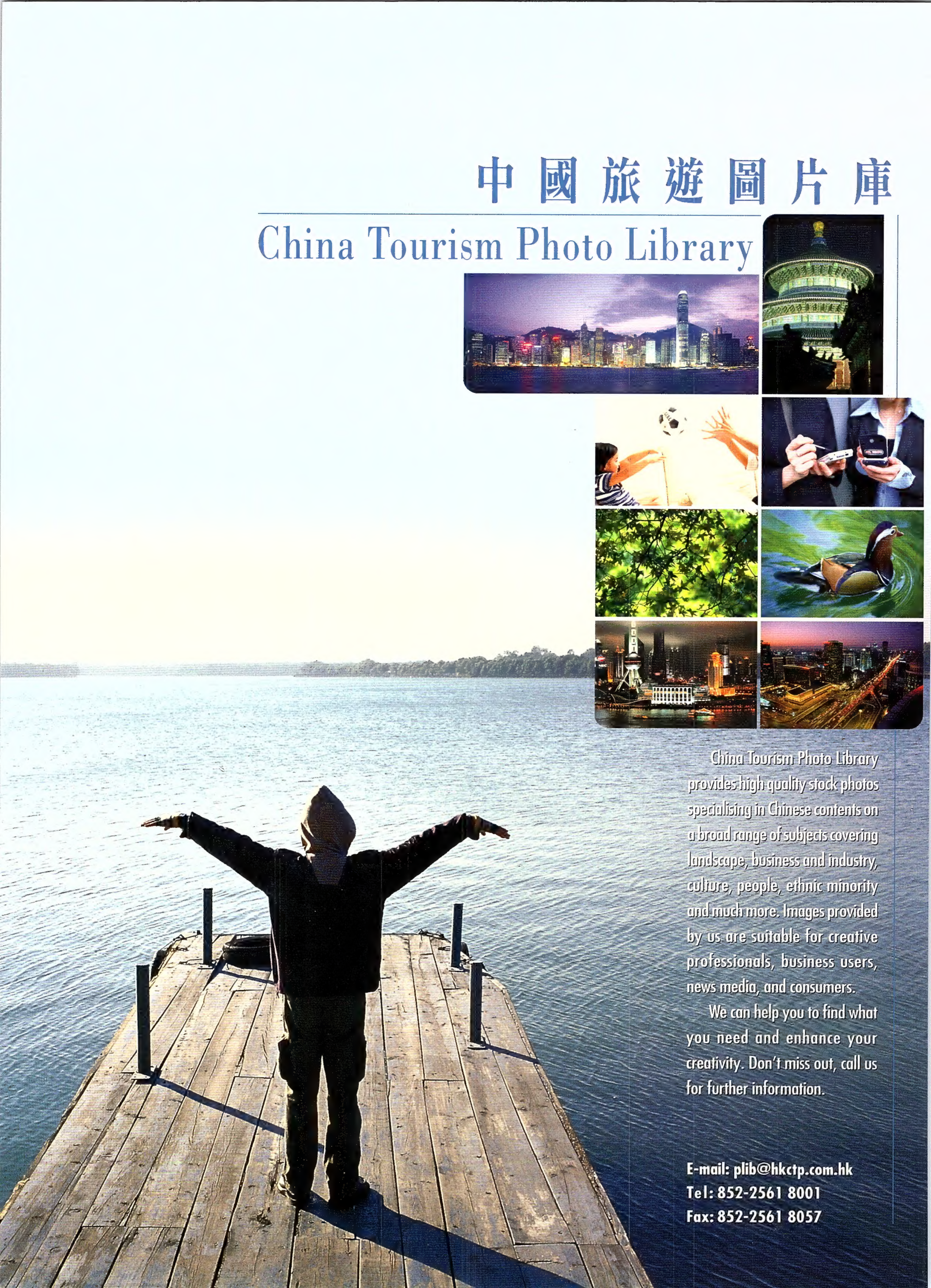

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